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Gender and Sustainability in Ecological Intentional Communities

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Gender and Sustainability in Ecological Intentional Communities

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Abstract

Gender and Sustainability in Ecological Intentional Communities

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In 2018, the International Panel on Climate Change warned that hundreds of millions of people face immediate risk of drought, floods, and extreme heat due to global warming. In this thesis, I introduce *ecological intentional communities*, alternative societies where people live together based on explicit common values, including radical sustainability and participatory democracy. I discuss my interview and ethnographic research at two communities, Navdanya Bioconversation Farm and Twin Oaks Intentional Community, that are seeking anti-capitalist, feminist solutions to global climate change. I discuss how Navdanya mobilizes essentialist rhetoric about the role of third-world women in environmental stewardship in order to increase their economic power and legitimize their agricultural knowledge. My research on Twin Oaks provides new directions for gendered organization theory by illuminating the potential of restructuring work and familial arrangements in a manner that directly confronts the unpaid care work of women and the hierarchical division of labor. This thesis demonstrates how ecological intentional communities can serve as real utopian models for restructuring society beyond patriarchy, capitalism, and environmental degradation.

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Chapter One

Introduction

In 2018, the International Panel on Climate Change warned that hundreds of millions of people face immediate risk of drought, floods, and extreme heat due to global warming. According to these 100 scientists, avoiding ecological crises demands massive changes to society (IPCC 2018). There is widespread agreement among scientists that rising global temperatures are due to human activity and that rapid, unprecedented changes to the structure of human society are necessary in order to avoid catastrophic loss of human life. The processes of climate change have been linked to capitalism's inherent expansionary tendencies and to technological development to escalate commodity production (Clark and York 2005). Yet, solutions have been focused almost entirely on attempts to maintain the status quo with the implementation of new technologies without challenging current ethical, moral, and political arrangements (Günel 2019). In this thesis, I identify two communities, Navdanya Bioconversation Farm and Twin Oaks Intentional Community, that are challenging current ethical, moral, and political arrangements. These communities are seeking anti-capitalist solutions to global climate change. Importantly, both organizations are also committed to feminist social change. Patriarchy and capitalism compound the injustice experienced by women and the environment by extracting their surplus value: in the case of women, their unpaid care work, and in the case of the environment, the exploitation of natural resources. My goal in this thesis is to discuss each community's theories and practices of sustainability and feminism in order to understand how societies must change in order to avert environmental catastrophe.

Navdanya and Twin Oaks are unique cases for studying responses to climate change. They are organizations that challenge capitalist assumptions by prioritizing sustainability and

feminism over corporate profit-making. Navdanya is a non-profit bioconservation farm and educational center founded by activist Vandana Shiva in Ramgarh Village, Uttarakhand, India in 1994. The organization operates a network of seed banks and activist women's groups throughout the country that work to promote indigenous agricultural practices through education, direct action, and legal lobbying. Twin Oaks is an income-sharing commune in Louisa, Virginia, USA founded in 1967. The community is home to about 85 adults and 10 children, who operate several community businesses, grow most of their own food, and make decisions together through democratic processes. I chose Navdanya and Twin Oaks as my field sites because both are implementing practices that are simultaneously anti-capitalist, feminist, and sustainable. I also selected these field sites on the basis of their community's geography, method of social change, and value system. Having one field site in India and one field site in the United States allows me to demonstrate the different dilemmas and solutions that need to be implemented in response to vastly different political-economic contexts. Specifically, I ask how are groups trying to achieve sustainability and democracy in Western versus non-Western geographies? Navdanya and Twin Oaks also take very different methods of achieving their goals – Navdanya is an outward-facing social movement organization while Twin Oaks is an inward-facing, anti-institutional community. Investigating why each community chooses to employ these distinct methods can help us explore the different paths to social change. Despite these great differences in geography and methods of social change, both communities practice ways of life that are radically sustainable compared to the surrounding society and promote anti-consumerism and feminism.

They are both what I call *ecological intentional communities (EICs)*. Ecological intentional communities are alternative societies where people live together based on explicit

common values, including radical sustainability and participatory democracy. Ecological intentional communities are places that are actively attempting to implement many of the sustainability practices necessary to avert ecological catastrophe. As such, EICs are real-world laboratories for evaluating social sustainability solutions, including organic, self-sustaining food production, renewable energy production, recycling, and elimination of waste. EICs are also implementing communal systems of governance and economics, rearranging intimate relationships, and restructuring work arrangements.

The communal economy and participatory democracy practiced in EICs have many implications for reimagining traditional gender configurations. I observed during my fieldwork that Twin Oaks and Navdanya are radically reconfiguring gender relations in families and at work as well as in society at large. This is an especially important point to consider as theories of environmental (in)justice have largely lacked a gendered analysis. Buckingham and Kulcur (2009) showed in their study of waste management that gendered institutional structures and a failure to interrogate inequality within the household compounds environmental injustice. In these ways, EICs take on some utopian characteristics - including those which might create a less oppressively gendered and more sustainable society - but the experiences and impacts of these characteristics vary among individual members and communities, and as membership, relationships, and organizational policies differ. It is also possible that EICs create unintended problems for their members and for the environment. The goal of studying EICs through in-depth interviews and participant observation is to identify the key features of members, their relationships, and the organization that allow for a less oppressive and more sustainable society.

Sociological research has yet to consider ecological intentional communities as “real utopias” (Wright 2013) that can act as models for wider social change. Envisioning real utopias

is a practice in developing alternatives to current dominant institutions while acknowledging the challenges and complexities of realizing human ideals. While previous research in environmental sociology has helped us understand environmental inequality and the causes and experiences of natural disasters, it has yet to consider what I call *prefigurative environmental politics* in the fight against climate change. Prefigurative environmental politics consider the mechanisms through which environmental movements embody the society which they want to create. Particularly, I ask, how do the environmental politics of different models of ecological intentional communities prefigure decision-making structures and gender relations in the family and at work? A study of the social organization of ecological intentional communities will allow sociologists, environmentalists, and feminists to gain a better understanding of the future being modeled by sustainability practices in EICs.

METHODOLOGY

In order to understand the prefigurative environmental politics of Twin Oaks Intentional Community and Navdanya Bioconversation Farm, I conducted ethnographic and in-depth interview research at each community during the summer of 2019. At each field site, I recruited research subjects to highlight the variation in perspectives at that community.

I lived and worked at Navdanya for three weeks as a member of the organization's bijak (seed intern) program, performing ethnographic participant-observation and conducting eight in-depth interviews. At Navdanya, I conducted three interviews with staff members and five interviews with visitors. Although I encountered a language barrier with most of the staff members, I was able to conduct one translated interview with the help of a fellow participant in the bijak program. All of my interviews at this field site were conducted with women due to a language barrier with most of the men on staff and the lack of men in the visitor program. I

conducted interviews with visitors from the United States, France, the Netherlands, Colombia, and India.

I spent four weeks at Twin Oaks, where I participated in their three-week visitor program, attended the community's annual Queer Gathering, and conducted ten interviews. I conducted nine interviews with current members and one interview with a former member of the community. My interview subjects were varied in length of membership: four had been in the community for more than ten years and six for less than ten years. Regarding gender, two were men, five were women; three were non-binary. Seven respondents were white and three were multiracial.

Ethnographic research through living and working in these communities allowed me to build relationships within the community and to observe daily practices and interactions in order to better understand the structuring of each community. Conducting in-depth interviews allowed me to understand how members make meaning of their participation in their communities (Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw 2011; Pugh 2013). During these interviews, I attempted to understand how members make meaning of their experiences living in community. My goal was to access people's motivations, beliefs, meanings, and feelings about their experiences in community, including their reflections about how labor is divided and decisions are made. These interviews helped me understand the implications of life in ecological intentional communities for feminist and sustainable futures by tapping into the cultural schemas of participants in each organization (Pugh 2013).

Access and Researcher Role in the Field

I gained access to my field sites through their formal visitor programs. I located Navdanya through the Global Ecovillage Network (GEN) and contacted the organization through

the website to apply for the bijak (seed intern) program. In my application, I included information about my membership in an ecological intentional community in the United States, informed them of my intention to conduct research, and provided information for a local emergency contact connected to me by my family. I also gained access to Twin Oaks through the formal visitor program. In my introductory email, I informed them of my intention to conduct research, provided detailed information about the nature of the community where I live and our desire to learn from their community, and included information about my personal skills and experience in specific agricultural labor areas.

Once gaining entry to my field sites, I conducted participant-observation on a daily basis, taking note of interactions and practices I observed. To fully immerse myself in local life, I behaved as a member of the community, attending decision-making meetings, participating in their communal labor system, and sharing meals and living quarters with community members. By participating in the communal labor systems, I was able to observe firsthand the division of labor in each community. Performing those tasks myself allowed me to embody the day to day life of my research subjects. Furthermore, by living in the community and participating in social activities with the group, I was able become familiar with the nuances of particular relationships between members. This allowed me to observe how daily practices reflected what participants told me in our interviews.

Throughout my data collection, my positionality affected what kinds of information and experiences that I was able to access. In both communities, I was both an insider and outsider, strategic positions that I was able to draw on in the course of field work (Reyes 2018). At Navdanya, I was most impacted by my racial, ethnic, national, and gender identities as an English-speaking, half-white, half-Punjabi woman from the United States. Most distinctly, my

worldview is distinctly shaped by my experience as a United States citizen. Having been raised in the United States, I am certainly an outsider in terms of the personal experiences with the impacts of colonization and globalization that many members of Navdanya have experienced. In addition, my position as an English-speaker allowed me to communicate only with some members of the community. The English-speakers at Navdanya were the visitors and the office staff, while the majority of the working-class members of the organization spoke Garhwali, Hindi, and other Indian languages, and did not speak English. I was also able to strategically mobilize my identity as a half-Punjabi woman in a setting where most of the visitors were Western with no Indian heritage. Similar to Reyes' (2018) discussion of how the visibility of certain characteristics depends on whom you are interacting with, my Indian heritage is more easily recognized by other Indians, as is my last name. Beyond being recognized as having Indian heritage, my cultural familiarity, such as with food and dress in the region, helped me to gain trust among staff members. My identity as a woman in a woman-centric organization also impacted my ability to gain access to the organization and particularly to be able to gain trust with women interview participants.

At Twin Oaks, my gender, race, sexual orientation, and membership status in an intentional community most strongly impacted the course of my field work. Being a member of an intentional community not only allowed me to quickly gain trust with research participants, but also gave me an insider vantage point through which to understand the cultural considerations and dilemmas of community life. Having familiarity with other EICs, and associations of communities, including the Foundation for Intentional Community (FIC), North American Students of Cooperation (NASCO), the Federation of Egalitarian Communities (FEC), and the Austin Cooperative Business Association (ACBA), often allowed me to quickly earn

trust and build connections with members. For example, I was able to build rapport with community members through a former visitor who is also a member of the Austin Cooperative Business Association. Other community members who were board members of the Federation of Egalitarian Communities were particularly eager to talk to me because they were interested in recruiting my community to join the organization. I was also able to strategically mobilize my position as a queer woman in order to build rapport with queer and women research participants, to gain entry to the 2019 Twin Oaks Queer Gathering, and participate in other queer-specific events while spending time in the community. My biracial identity also garnered me a specific vantage point. My whiteness allowed me to pass as an insider in a primarily white community, while my Indian heritage allowed me to connect with the two Indian members of the community around our shared experiences. As Reyes (2018a) discusses, my background and identity were not passive factors in my research experience, but actively influenced my research topic and choices in the field. I am drawn to, and able to access, field sites in both the United States and India because of my cultural background, interested in feminist organizations and women's experiences because I am a woman, and convinced by the theoretical importance of intentional communities because I live in one.

Ethical Considerations

During the course of my research, I took conscientious measures to protect the privacy, confidentiality and safety of my research participants as well as my own safety. I received IRB approval to conduct this project. All the research participants for both the interview and participant observation portions of my data collection were informed of my status as a researcher. Both communities had had researchers conduct data collection before and were familiar with and comfortable with the process. Participants at both sites were aware that the

focus of my study was on gender and sustainability in communities. All of my interview and ethnographic data were transcribed as soon as possible after the interaction and any audio recordings were deleted. Electronic data is stored in a password encrypted file on my computer which no one else is able to access. All research subjects have been given pseudonyms. I have chosen to disclose the name of the communities I am studying in order to ensure the auditability of my findings and to connect this research with previous documentation of these communities. While keeping the names of the communities anonymous would have been preferable for the sake of maintaining the privacy of the interviewees, I decided to name these communities in order to contextualize my research within current understandings of each community, which are both well-known and have been previously written about. The choice to name the communities allows me to situate my research within the empirical and theoretical work of others to build collective knowledge of the complexities of building sustainable communities (Reyes 2018b).

This study was funded through a combination of fellowships, grants, and teaching assistantship funds from the Sociology Department at the University of Texas at Austin. None of the institutions from which I am receiving funding have any direct conflict of interest with my research sites, so I do not foresee any political complications. I have, however, considered my commitments as both a member of an EIC and as a researcher during the writing stage of this project and taken special care not to distort or omit relevant details because of my personal connection to the communities that I study (Wacquant 2002).

ORGANIZATION OF THE THESIS

This paper investigates Navdanya Bioconservation Farm and Twin Oaks Intentional Community as ecological intentional communities attempting to establish a more sustainable, feminist organization of society. Both of these communities are anti-consumerist and anti-

patriarchal models for society. However, when placed in historical, political, and economic context, these two visions take very different forms. The philosophies of social change are also understood differently by various actors within each community. The purpose of this study is to describe each community's philosophy of social change as it relates to feminism and sustainability and to understand how various actors within each community make sense of these philosophies. I expand on existing literature on transnational feminism, theories of gendered organizations, social movement theory, and the study of real utopias to provide a framework for studying ecological intentional communities and prefigurative environmental politics.

In Chapter 2, *Nurturing Nature: Strategic Essentialism in Ecofeminism*, I introduce the reader to Navdanya Bioconversation Farm in Uttarakhand, India. I first describe the purpose of the organization as an educational and advocacy organization for biodiversity conservation, sustainable agriculture, and protection of farmers' rights. This chapter provides an overview of the history of the organization under the leadership of its founder, Vandana Shiva, and the paradigms of ecofeminism and earth democracy advocated for by the organization. Next, I describe how various actors in the organization understand gender, utilizing organizational documents and interviews with staff members and visitors. This section describes the ecofeminist philosophy of the organization, where feminism is linked to the historical roles of women in agriculture and a goal of eliminating dependence on the market economy. Finally, I put the actors' understandings of gender in the context of transnational feminism and literature on ecofeminism in order to articulate why the essentialist philosophy of ecofeminism is strategic for the goals of the organization in the context of the globalization of India's agricultural sector.

In Chapter 3, *Bureaucratizing the Revolution: Gender and Sustainability in Twin Oaks Intentional Community*, I shift to my second field site: the income-sharing commune, Twin Oaks,

in Virginia, USA. At the beginning of this chapter, I describe the founding of Twin Oaks as a commune based on B.F. Skinner's *Walden Two* in the 1960s. In the introduction, I also describe the community's membership process, decision-making process, labor system, family planning policies, and living arrangements. Next, I discuss the connection between sustainability and feminism in the community through resource-sharing, the division of labor, and the disruption of the nuclear family. In the chapter, I utilize Acker's (1990) "Theory of Gendered Organizations" to contextualize Twin Oaks as an alternative to the ideal-type bureaucratic work organization and discuss the cultural arrangements that make possible the community's significantly lower than average environmental footprint.

Finally, in *Conclusion: Comparing and Contrasting Two Feminist Visions*, I discuss the similarities and differences between Twin Oaks and Navdanya in relation to their understandings of gender, their historical contexts, their tactics as social movements, and their positions as real utopias. I argue that these two EIC's can further us along the path of achieving a sustainable and feminist society. I discuss both anti-capitalist and yet seemingly competing feminist visions: Twin Oaks of a post-gender society and Navdanya of one where women are rewarded for their particular role in environmental stewardship. I next explain how both these visions came to be in the historical context of the New Left in the United States of the 1960s in the case of Twin Oaks and of the Green Revolution of India's agricultural sector in the case of Navdanya. The following section situates each community in social movement theory: Navdanya as a post-citizenship social movement organization and Twin Oaks as an extra-institutional alternative to capitalism. I then describe both communities as real utopias that attempt to embody the futures they wish to create (Wright 2013). Finally, I turn to the implications of this research for

developing an account of viable alternatives to the existing social order and describe potential areas for further research.

Although previous research has documented the conflicts inherent in our existing social institutions in terms of climate change, patriarchy, and capitalism and helped us to understand environmental and gendered inequality, to date there has been no study of intentional communities as potential sites for transformation of the existing social order. Climate scientists and feminist scholars have made it clear that we need a complete transformation of our existing institutions in order to avoid rampant inequality and total ecological collapse. Everything must change, including work arrangements, family structures, food and energy production, waste disposal, and even political and economic arrangements as a whole. This begs the question: what would an alternative to our current society look like? How can our current society be transformed into one which is environmentally sustainable, democratically governed, and free of gendered and other forms of discrimination? Developing an account of communities which are attempting to create such a society can help us to develop a theory of transformation to achieve such a goal. This thesis uses Navdanya Bioconservation Farm and Twin Oaks Intentional Community as case studies in developing an account of sustainable feminist visions for the future, one that might be necessary for the preservation of a livable environment on Earth itself.

Chapter Two

Nurturing Nature: Strategic Essentialism in Ecofeminism

INTRODUCTION

Driving from the hot, polluted streets of Ramgarh Village, Uttarakhand into Navdanya Bioconservation Farm through orchards boasting nine species of indigenous mangoes is like entering a veritable oasis. The 45-acre organic biodiversity farm and orchard was established in 1994 about 150 miles from the capital of India in the foothills of the Himalayas. Previously a highly desertified plot of land serving as a eucalyptus monoculture, today the farm has replenished the groundwater basin with thousands of varieties of indigenous plant species (Birnbaum and Fox 2014). These plants are grown using what staff members refer to as agroecological techniques - meaning no chemical pesticides or fertilizers, no fossil-fuel powered equipment, and no genetically modified seeds. The bioconservation farm is a vision for how traditional agriculture methods could restore the environment and the economic lives of Indian farmers, and a protest against the increasing influence of Western industrial agriculture.

Bija Vidyapeeth or 'School of the Seed' was launched on the bioconservation farm in 2001 in order to promote "a vision of holistic solutions rooted in deep ecology and democracy as an alternative to the current world order" ("Bija Vidyapeeth – Earth University"). However, Navdanya is more than this physical campus or the school. Dr. Vinod Bhatt, Navdanya's Executive Director, describes the organization as a movement for biodiversity conservation, sustainable agriculture, and protection of farmers' rights.

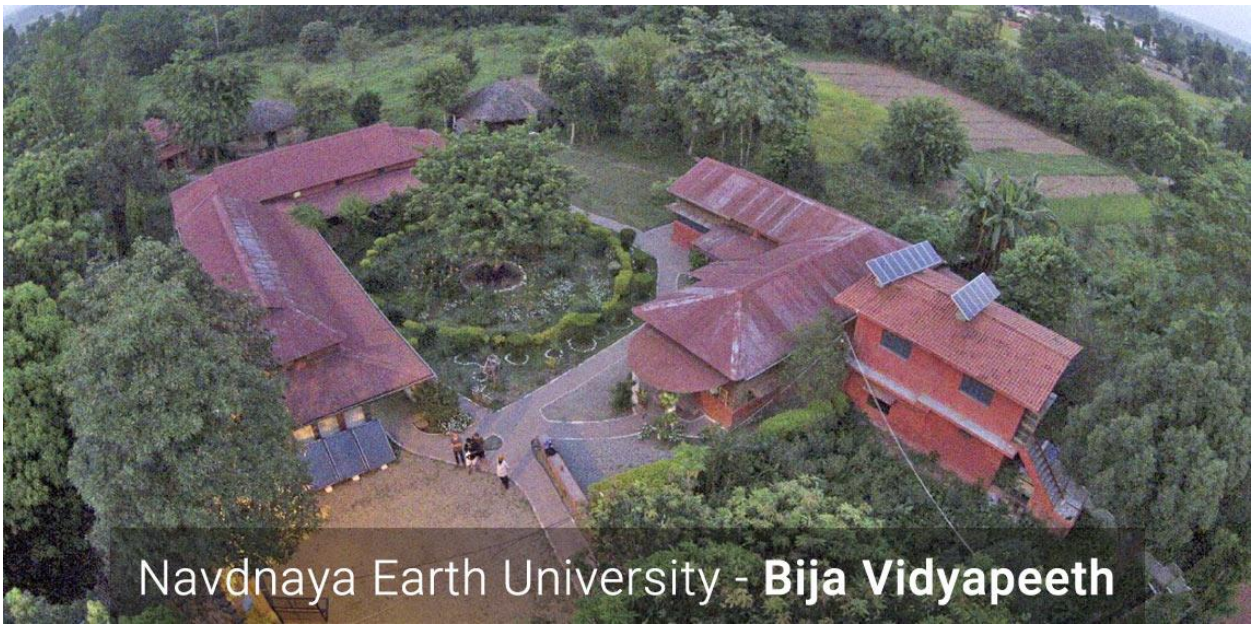

Figure 1: An aerial view of the main campus at Navdanya (Navdanya "Navdanya" n.d.)

The Navdanya movement was founded in 1987 by world-renowned activist and scientist Vandana Shiva as a seed saving movement in response to the increasing dependence of Indian farmers on genetically modified seeds sold by Western companies which require the use of industrial chemical fertilizers and pesticides. In 1984, the role of Western companies in industrialized agriculture had been thrust into the spotlight when an accident at a Union Carbide pesticide plant released 30 tons of highly toxic gas into the shanty towns of Bhopal, India on December 2, 1984, in what is known as the world's worst industrial disaster. The disaster left 300,000 injured and 15,000 dead, in addition to destroying local biodiversity, and the victims have received little to no compensation three decades later, although they are still struggling with ongoing health problems and a poisoned ecosystem (Robbins 2007). This event jumpstarted India's environmental movement. Growing unrest about the role of American companies in India's agricultural system prompted Shiva's involvement in the seed sovereignty movement. In 1987, Shiva started establishing seed banks throughout India to ensure the diversity of indigenous plant species was not lost as many Indian farmers continued to use genetically

modified seeds, chemical pesticides, and monoculture farming techniques in place of traditional farming methods. Navdanya registered as a trust in 1991 and community seed banks were established in Tehri Garhwal and Karnataka. Under Shiva's guidance, the seed sovereignty movement organized several legal challenges and public protests to seed patenting over the next few decades, including the neem patent in Europe in 1994, the basmati rice patent in Texas in 1998, and Monsanto's GMO Bt cotton in 1998. Research has linked the economic factors associated with Bt. Cultivation and the 300,000 farmer suicides that have occurred over the past two decades of India's agrarian crisis (De Tavernier and Thomas 2017). Writing about the corporate monopolies of genetically modified seeds, Shiva refers to the patenting of biological life as biopiracy and as "the means to protect the piracy of the wealth of non-Western peoples as a right of Western powers" (2012, p.5). Therefore, challenging the legal patenting of seeds and preserving indigenous seeds is understood as a direct confrontation with colonization as well as a fight for cultural and biological diversity. Today, the foundation has set up fifty-four community seed banks in sixteen states of India which have resulted in the conservation of more than 3000 indigenous rice varieties adapted to meet regional ecological needs as well as 75 varieties of wheat, hundreds of millets, pseudo-cereals, pulses, oilseeds, vegetables and medicinal plants.

Navdanya theorizes its movement for land sovereignty, food sovereignty, and seed sovereignty as calling for a paradigm of Earth democracy. According to the website, Earth democracy "provides an alternative worldview in which… ecological responsibility and economic justice replace greed, consumerism and competition as objectives of human life" ("Earth Democracy"). In this view, sustainable agriculture practices are not only in line with, but directly necessary for economic justice, as well as being at odds with Western colonization. In May 2001, Navdanya launched its campaign for food rights and food sovereignty (Anna Swaraj)

at Anna Panchayat (Public Tribunal on Hunger). Food sovereignty is defined by the organization as the right and freedom to grow and have access to diverse, nutritious and affordable food. The agroecological farming methods promoted by Navdanya are understood as strengthening food sovereignty, farmers' rights, and economic justice. To date, Navdanya has trained over five hundred thousand farmers in food sovereignty and sustainable agriculture (Birnbaum and Fox 2014).

Bija Vidyapeeth (School of the Seed) is the learning center located at Navdanya Biodiversity Conservation Farm in Doon Valley, Uttarakhand. Every year, Bija Vidyapeeth hosts long-term and short-term visitors from all over the world as bijaks (seed interns), holds conferences and classes for Indian farmers, students from India and abroad, and gives tours to day visitors. The farm community is made up of staff members and volunteers from around the world. Staff members are mostly men from Garhwal, the mountainous region just North of the farm, who stay on the farm for several weeks to months at a time with short breaks to return home to their families. The farm workers also consist of women from local villages and students from local agricultural colleges.

Bijaks (seed interns) are volunteers who stay at the farm for more than two weeks up to several years at a time, who apply online for the program, often learning about Navdanya through an interest in organic farming or Vandana Shiva's activism. Although the program is open to everyone, bijaks are mostly women and are often international visitors or more affluent Indian nationals due to the relatively high cost of accommodations on the farm at between 1000-2700 Indian Rupees (13-35 US Dollars) per night. Staff members prepare locally sourced vegetarian food for the bijaks and other visitors. Accommodations consistof dormitory style living. Visitors are expected to follow certain cultural norms while on the farm, including: no

public displays of intimacy, including for married couples; sleeping in dormitories segregated by sex; no meat, drugs, alcohol, or smoking; signing out when leaving the farm; and a dress code that requires men to cover their chest and shoulders and women to cover their chest, shoulders, and knees. Every morning, a staff member leads the bijaks in a morning circle consisting of meditation and Vedic chants before the group is supervised in working on various farming tasks including weeding, planting, transplanting, watering, mulching, and preparing the soil. In the afternoons, bijaks participate in a variety of activities including lectures, classes, and tours meant to educate them on agroecological farming techniques, Navdanya's various projects, and local life. The Navdanya visitor guide states that "our intention is that these learnings, processes and this way of being are spread across the world through our *Bijaks*" ("Bija Vidyapeeth – Earth University"). The purpose of the bijak program is to teach visitors about earth democracy and biodiversity, with the hope that bijaks will continue to promote these values when they return home.

Figure 2: Bijaks on a farm tour at Navdanya (Author's photo, 2019)

Navdanya considers itself to be an earth-centric and women-centric movement, and has multiple missions carried out on the local, national, and transnational levels by a wide range of actors. The Navdanya Bioconservation Farm and Bija Vidyapeeth at Doon Valley are one center of activity, and work in conjunction with an office in Delhi, local women's groups, networks of farmers, and seed banks across India. The meaning of Navdanya varies from the perspective of each actor, who is influenced by their position in the organization, as well as their ethnicity, class, gender, and position under colonization and patriarchy.

GENDER AT NAVDANYA

The meaning of gender at Navdanya can be understood through the lenses of three different actors: 1) Vandana Shiva and the organization, 2) staff members, and 3) visitors.

Navdanya's vision for farmers' rights, economic justice, and ecological sustainability is directly tied to the organization's philosophy of ecofeminism crafted by founder Vandana Shiva. Staff members interpret this philosophy through the lens of their own lived experiences. Visitors to Navdanya come from a wide range of cultural backgrounds and understandings of gender, but do not usually understand their experiences at Navdanya as gendered.

Shiva's Ecofeminist Philosophy and Organizational Practice

Ecofeminism is a way of understanding women's relationship to the natural environment that is promoted by Navdanya's founder Vandana Shiva. Shiva describes ecological feminisms as recognizing "the intrinsic worth of all species, the intelligence of all life, and the self-organizational capacity of beings" (Shiva 2000, p.74). According to this viewpoint, environmental degradation is the inevitable outcome of patriarchal domination and Western colonization. Therefore, women's liberation, anti-capitalism, and sustainability are all tenets of Shiva's ecological feminism.

Shiva's understanding is embedded in the organizational philosophy of Navdanya. On the organization's website, ecofeminism is defined as the liberation of both nature and women from violence and exploitation, one that recognizes both the rights of Mother Earth and of women. Shiva understands the co-domination of women and nature through a lens of colonization, in which women's bodies, plants, and animals, and life itself are invaded and exploited by Western powers and patriarchy (Shiva 2012). One element of this domination is the objectification and denial of subjectivity of women, animals, and non-Western cultures, which Shiva sees as being reinforced by Eurocentric scientific discourse. Patriarchal hierarchies that control the legitimization of knowledge discount indigenous ways of knowing (Shiva 2000). By preserving indigenous knowledge through the seed bank and the practices at the Navdanya Bioconservation

Farm, and then disseminating this knowledge to both Indian farmers and Westerners, Navdanya functions to legitimize indigenous agricultural knowledge. By connecting with networks of farmers throughout India, Navdanya practitioners learn indigenous agricultural practices, which are then carried out on the farm, which serves as a model of those practices. Navdanya staff members work to counter corporate narratives that lead farmers to believe industrial agriculture practices are more profitable than indigenous practices. Executive Director Vinod Bhatt said, "We have to reduce the dependency of farmers on the market." For Bhatt, Navdanya's critique of patriarchy is inextricably linked with the critique of capitalism. Because Vandana Shiva understands the industrial agricultural methods promoted by Western corporations to be a part of patriarchal hierarchies, the dissemination and preservation of indigenous agricultural knowledge is understood as an ecofeminist practice.

The philosophy of ecofeminism is also carried out through the Diverse Women for Diversity program, which organizes women for food sovereignty as the National Women's Alliance for Food Rights on the national level and the Mahala Anna Swaraj group on the local level. Aanya, the bijak coordinator, told me about the Mahala Anna Swaraj group, translated to Women for Seed Sovereignty. Navdanya staff members coordinate around 28 groups of women across 13 or 14 villages that meet twice a month to discuss a range of topics including politics, food, health issues, and education. Navdanya also helps women gain access to the capital to purchase land and other agricultural capital through the Anna Swaraj groups, which function as small lending networks overseen by Navdanya staff members. Aanya describes these meetings as "revolutionary" because it is contrary to the stereotype of a submissive Indian woman for these groups to be discussing serious issues. The Anna Swaraj groups are not just focused on agriculture, but a platform for women to discuss a range of topics, including politics in India,

food, health issues, education, and the impacts of various issues on their families. Furthermore, some of the topics discussed in the groups are taboo for these women, according to Aanya, including discussions of menstrual hygiene and sexual relations. The Anna Swaraj groups are consciousness raising groups, where women can discuss their needs and opinions on a variety of interconnected topics in order to build solidarity and mobilize actions. These women's groups are frequently cited by organizational actors as one of the primary ways that Navdanya carries out its ecofeminist mission. Aanya described them as "the key to Navdanya" saying that "Navdanya is not only this farm at Ramgarh Dehradun, but it's more about the movement which is happening through these women. These women are basically seed producers, seed savers and you know, they take the legacy of the traditional seed forward." The Navdanya mission is about preserving indigenous agriculture knowledge in a time of Western domination, and it is through the local women's groups that this goal is carried out.

Executive Director Vinod Bhatt also understands Navdanya as ecofeminist because the organization helps women avoid dependency on the market and on their families. Navdanya helps women gain access to the capital to purchase land and other agricultural capital through the Anna Swaraj groups, which function as small lending networks overseen by Navdanya staff members. By helping women to grow their own food and herbal medicine, instead of buying from companies, Navdanya helps women avoid reliance on the market economy. This is a significant contrast with liberal feminisms that embrace free market ideology and work to incorporate women into the market economy. Learning to save and sell indigenous seeds, as opposed to buying seeds which are genetically engineered to only last one season from corporations, allows women to have the potential to be completely self-sufficient in their food production. This form of advocacy is in direct opposition to the narrative of corporatized

development which has located women as tools for profit maximization and market growth (Moeller 2018).

On an organizational level, Navdanya views itself as an ecofeminist organization, a philosophy which is curated by the founder Vandana Shiva, and carried out by various actors. Advocating for policy change, legitimizing indigenous knowledge, and bringing together groups of women on the local level are all considered to be ecofeminist practices of the organization.

Staff Members

To the Navdanya staff members I talked to, the ecofeminist philosophy of the organization is intrinsically linked to the traditional roles of women in agriculture in India. Most staff members on the farm overseeing day-to-day operations are men. These men are recruited primarily from Garhwal and reside on the farm year-round, with short breaks regularly to return home and visit their families. These men perform the bulk of the plowing, harvesting, and more strength-intensive physical labor, while women do the planting, weeding, and other daily maintenance tasks. The perspectives of the men staff members are not included here primarily due to a language barrier, which prevented me from conducting interviews with them. During my visit to Navdanya, there were five women on the staff occupying key positions: three in the seed bank, one in the soil lab, and one coordinating the bijak program.

Staff members interpret ecofeminism based on their lived experiences, including the traditional gendered division of labor in agriculture in India. The bijak supervisor, Aanya, describes women as the backbone of Indian agriculture, contributing significantly more to farm and care work than men. She said, “Men also work, but in the farm, their inputs are very less. But the woman sows. The woman takes care of the compost, takes care of the cows, milks the cows, the animals, bathes them, takes care of the land, nurtures the plants, supports the family,

and cooks for her family. So, women are the backbone. If you look across India, it's the women who are collecting the fodder for the cows. The men don't. The men you will see in the villages on the street smoking hookah or just gossiping." According to Aanya and other staff members, the daily work of farm maintenance is traditionally women's work, while men contribute to tasks that require larger amounts of physical strength such as plowing and harvesting. This is the gendered division of agricultural labor in the villages surrounding Navdanya Bioconservation Farm in Doon Valley and is reflected in the gendered division of labor on the farm itself.

The staff members who work on the farm believe that the division of agricultural labor in India is the result of natural differences between men and women. Therefore, they do not question the division of labor between men and women who work on the farm. When asked about the gendered division of labor on the farm, Vinod Bhatt explained to me that the jobs of plowing and heavy lifting are men's jobs because they are stronger, while women are better suited for more nurturing jobs such as weeding. This perspective was reiterated by Aanya, who stated that it makes sense that women would do the bulk of the agricultural labor because they are nurturing by nature. According to Aanya, this nurturing quality is "in the DNA" of women, which is why they do care work for the family and for the Earth. She also believes this is why Navdanya attracts mostly women visitors for the bijak program. Similarly, Nadia told me of the special connection that women have with the seed, saying that when women plant the seed in the ground, they nurture them and take care of them like their own children.

While women do the bulk of the agricultural labor on family farms in India, this is understood as domestic work, which women are responsible for while men are away from the home engaging in wage labor. Vinod Bhatt offered this as another explanation for the larger number of men than women working on the farm, stating that women in nearby villages do not

work outside of the home. In the local villages, families often have their own agricultural plots that are worked by women while the men work outside the home. This is the case for the majority of women in the village where Nadia lives; she has worked at the Navdanya seed bank for fifteen years. She learned seed-keeping from the women in her family who have been doing this work for generations, but she is the first to have an opportunity to be paid for that labor. To Nadia, Navdanya's ecofeminist philosophy is understood as the opportunity for financial independence. Working at Navdanya gives Nadia an opportunity to earn money and not have to be dependent on anyone else, without which she would be working at home and not being paid for her labor. This experience has led Nadia to believe in the mission of Navdanya, because she wants more women with agricultural skills to have the opportunity to gain paid employment.

Figure 3: Nadia sorting seeds at Navdanya (Author's photo, 2019)

Visitors

Bijaks are seed interns who come to volunteer at Navdanya for two weeks to years at a time. While this program is open to anyone, bijaks tend to be women. The relatively high cost of staying on the farm is a barrier for many locals, therefore the bijaks are often international visitors, primarily from Western countries, or more economically privileged Indian nationals. During the three weeks I was on the farm, the bijaks were all women, ranging from age twenty to mid-fifties. Two of these women were Indian nationals, one physician and one student from a university in Delhi. Other bijaks were from the United States, the Netherlands, France, the United Kingdom and South Africa. Among the visitors at Navdanya while I was there, the vast majority were university students studying topics such as agriculture, environmental studies, and food security. The conversations I had with bijaks while at Navdanya suggested that these visitors do not hold always explicitly feminist motivations for participating in the organization. Most bijaks are motivated by the desire to learn about traditional Indian agricultural practices and experience an alternative way of living.

During my time at Navdanya, I got to know Janna, a white Dutch woman in her early twenties visiting from her home in the United Kingdom where she lives with her boyfriend and works as a yoga teacher. Janna is studying environmental studies at her university in the UK and first heard of Shiva in one of her course texts while studying food security. Janna immediately became interested in the concept of Earth democracy and biodiversity conservation, describing it as "so different than anything else we have in the Western world, it's a really beautiful concept." Coming to Navdanya was an attempt to bring what Janna saw as very abstract, theoretical concepts at school into practice, especially in terms of the environmental impacts of Western countries. She said that "It's different going somewhere, experiencing it, you know, like, I've

always been interested in how the Western roles in which I live, how we're infecting the developing world, and what kind of things we're inflicting on them." From Janna's perspective, by coming to visit Navdanya, she will be better informed about the impact of her actions back home in Europe. After visiting Navdanya, she plans to shift her priorities when making decisions about how and what to eat, especially paying closer attention to GMO labelling and eating local foods.

Although Janna is generally aware of Shiva's feminist orientation, it didn't stand out to her as an important part of her motivation to visit Navdanya. Janna understands gender at Navdanya mostly through the cultural expectations of her while staying on the farm, particularly in terms of dress. While she acknowledges that the dress code is based in cultural norms, she finds the restrictions extreme and uncomfortable because she is used to dressing a lot differently. She recounted being told to cover up when her lower back became visible while bending over to transplant rice paddies, and how the experience made her feel scrutinized and overwhelmed.

Another visitor, Biyu, grew up on a family farm in China before her family relocated to the United States where she is now studying environmental studies and helping to operate her college's small, organic farm. When Biyu came to Navdanya, she was most interested in learning different agricultural techniques that she could implement while farming back in the United States. Biyu thinks of the bijak program as a school for spreading knowledge and building community to bring people together to change the current agricultural system. She plans to implement some of the agro-ecological techniques she has learned when she returns home. She wants to plant more trees, build raised beds and use less plastic. Biyu is also surprised by all the cultural knowledge she has gained. Her perception of Indian women has changed, because before coming here she thought they didn't have any power and that their work was only housework

and taking care of the children. However, attending an Anna Swaraj meeting showed her how empowering it is for these women to be able to meet and discuss problems and make change in their communities. Being at Navdanya, she says, has also made her more aware of the privilege she has in being able to travel and attend a university. When Biyu goes home, she wants to give presentations to educate people about Navdanya and the culture of Northern India.

Figure 4: Men staff members at Navdanya supervising women bijaks in soil preparation (Author's photo, 2019)

The experiences of Janna and Biyu reflect the goals of the bijak program as illuminated on the Navdanya website, which were reiterated to me by staff members several times during my stay at Navdanya - the purpose of bringing in Western visitors is the hope that these visitors will be able to influence consumption patterns and agricultural methods in their home countries. Vandana Shiva understands the mission of preserving indigenous agricultural techniques in India

as being at odds with the domination of Western industrial agricultural practices which are considered more legitimate in Eurocentric scientific discourse. Western visitors are invited to Navdanya to see firsthand the success of indigenous practices with the hopes that they will spread the ideology of Navdanya around the world. Considering that women have been at the forefront of grassroots environmental movements and bear the burden placed on households to adopt environmental principles, it is a strategic choice for the organization to bring Western women into the self-proclaimed women-centric mission of Navdanya. However, some critics fear that this may ultimately serve to reify earth care work as women's work (Buckingham and Kulcur 2009; MacGregor 2006).

While I was at Navdanya, Sara was one of only two visitors in the bijak program who were Indian nationals, which gave her a different perspective on the organization than that of the Western visitors. Sara is a political science student at a university in Delhi who grew up in Assam and has read a lot about feminism in her classes. When farmers marched in Delhi in response to growing debt due to the agrarian crisis in India, Sara connected that immediately with the ecofeminism she had read about in class. A feminist herself, Sara was motivated to visit Navdanya and learn firsthand what farmers are experiencing. Sara, however, does not identify as an ecofeminist and finds certain problems with Vandana Shiva's philosophy. Particularly, Sara criticizes Shiva's desire to return to past forms of farming and her propagation of Gandhi's teachings, both of which Sara does not believe uphold gender equality. Referring to Shiva's idolization of Gandhi, Sara states that:

> He didn't propagate gender equality at all. I mean, he cheated women really badly. He actually believed that women should stay back at home and they should be the ones taking care of families, that they shouldn't be outside, and men are the bread earners. And

> I don't know how you put it as something being equal because I don't see it reflecting here. Women still have this understanding that plowing is only a man's job and a few other things are primarily men specific. I don't agree with that.

To Sara, the traditional farming methods that are being promoted by Shiva and Navdanya do not actually create a framework for gender equality because they are still based on naturalizing gender differences and on a Gandhian philosophy that Sara understands as patriarchal. Sara feels as though the conception of women being promoted by this framework is based on gender stereotypes:

> If you're going to base your equality on so much inequality? I don't know. She keeps saying that, women are in the fields, they're supposed to be nurturing, kind, because we can reproduce. Like when we work on the farms, it's like taking care of our children. All women have to be caring. Competitiveness, all of that is men's behavior. If you prescribe things like this, I don't particularly agree.

Although the women staff members I spoke to had incorporated naturalized assumptions about gender differences into their ways of thinking about the role of women in agriculture, Sara believes in a form of feminism that promotes what she sees as true equality between men and women. Sara also connects the dress code at Navdanya to her understanding of Shiva's desire to return to a traditional way of life. While the Western women visitors seemed to accept the restrictions as part of Indian culture and as something they should accept and respect while visiting the farm, Sara provided the contrary argument. As a student in New Delhi she is able to wear whatever she wants; other parts of India are adapting to allow women more freedom so Navdanya should adapt as well, especially if they are accepting international visitors. To Sara,

the dress code at Navdanya and other restrictions such as on public displays of intimacy, are patriarchal and tied to Shiva's essentialist ecofeminism philosophy.

Sara goes as far as to question Shiva's motivations for incorporating women into her seed saving movement, believing that it might have been a strategic choice:

> I've never heard her talk about feminism here. It's primarily about seed saving and stuff like that. And she mentions women in passing. It's never talking about equality. So sometimes, I feel like she created this entire ecofeminism sphere just to incorporate women into this entire movement. Because I feel like she was working against GMO seeds and the supporters of her were men, at least in India, I'm not sure outside, but then you realize if you have to create a mass movement, you need to incorporate women. Yeah, I feel like ecofeminism, at least what she propagates, grew out of that to create a mass movement.

Although Sara believes in the anti-GMO work being done at Navdanya, she is critical of whether the ecofeminism philosophy held by the organization is born out of true belief in equality or whether it is simply a strategic choice in accomplishing the organizational mission. Despite this, Sara does believe that the women who work for Navdanya and those that participate in the Anna Swaraj groups are empowered by their participation in the movement, especially in the sense that they are able to achieve financial independence, which may not have been otherwise possible.

Most visitors to Navdanya are women who have some familiarity with the feminist mission of the organization but do not consider that to be their primary motivation for participating. Instead, they are motivated by an interest in learning about and experiencing first-hand Indian agro-ecological practices. Western visitors specifically are viewed by staff members as intermediaries who will spread the ideology of Navdanya to their home countries where many

of the commodities of industrial agriculture in India are being consumed. Indian visitors to Navdanya tend to be highly educated, economically privileged and critical of the essentialist gendered nature of Navdanya's ecofeminist philosophy.

DISCUSSION

Using in-depth interviews and ethnographic fieldwork, I have illuminated how various actors understand the meaning of gender in the policies and practices of Navdanya Bioconservation Farm. The organizational mission and philosophy of ecofeminism is crafted directly by the founder Vandana Shiva. Shiva understands ecological feminism as one which aims to liberate both women and nature from domination and exploitation by patriarchy, capitalism, and Western colonization. Meanwhile, women staff members at Navdanya interpret this philosophy through the lens of their own lived experiences, one where there is a stark gendered division of labor in agriculture work in India. To these women, the contribution of Navdanya is to help women achieve financial independence in relation to their agriculture work. This perspective views the divisions of labor between men and women as a natural result of biological differences while questioning the differences between men and women in their access to resources. To the majority of visitors I met, their motivations for visiting Navdanya are a desire to gain agricultural and cultural knowledge. Although these visitors may have an awareness of the gendered nature of the organization, this is not a primary interest to them while participating in Navdanya. On the other hand, some visitors, like Sara, have an acute awareness of the gendered dynamics of the organization and in fact are critical of them.

The different frames through which various actors understand gender at Navdanya can be understood through a lens of transnational feminist theory, which builds on the experiences and writing of women of color and third world feminist approaches to insist that women's

experiences are not monolithic across the globe but are actually very different from one another. The Western bijaks also participate in the process of othering Indian women by making assumptions about their experiences under patriarchy and their autonomy (Mohanty 1988). For example, when Biyu is surprised to learn that Indian women have autonomy in their life choices or when the Western visitors accept the dress code because they assume that the cultural norm is for Indian women to accept restrictions on how they dress. Women's relational positions within structures of hierarchy and power in fact produce vastly different experience, perspectives, and interests for women especially as they relate to global economic interests and colonialism (Patil 2011, p.541). Based on this theory, we can understand how women with various positions within Navdanya might interpret their experiences in very different ways due to their varying positions of power within the global hierarchy and within the organization itself.

Secondly, the policies and practices at Navdanya, and the ways various actors interpret them, must be contextualized within the history of ecofeminism. Warren and Cheney (1991, p.179) defined ecofeminism as "a feminism which attempts to write the demands of the women's movement with those of the ecological movement in order to bring about a world and worldview that are not based on socioeconomic and conceptual structures of domination." At the heart of ecofeminism is a desire to understand that many systems of oppression are linked, and yet critiques of ecofeminism argue that in many cases the prescriptions and premises of its proponents serve to entrench gender inequality in institutions (Gaard 1997).

Specifically, Shiva's ecofeminism has been criticized for falling into two theoretical traps: 1) ideological selectivity and 2) ignoring historical practice. According to Agarwal (1998, p.65), "Shiva characterizes the pre-colonial world as one where (i) there was a strong ideological and material basis for harmony with nature and equality in social relations; (ii) women's position

in relation to men was different and equal; and (iii) not only did inequality not exist, it was a world in which exploitation was not even possible." However, in practice, pre-colonial India was characterized by strong gender hierarchies in terms of the gendered division of labor, property rights, and decision-making structures (Agarwal 1998, p.68). Agarwal (1998, p.68) argues that by obscuring the gendered hierarchies of the pre-colonial period, Shiva is also obscuring their continuation into the post-colonial period.

Under the essentialist notions of gender promulgated by Shiva's ecofeminism, women are moral agents who are idealized as acting in service of their families and the environments. This ideal woman is engaging in what Sasser (2018) refers to as sexual stewardship – she is assumed to be a fertile, reproducing being, who embodies environmental responsibility, and her improved status will allow her to make responsible choices for the well-being of the environment and her family. Sasser criticizes this view for placing the burden of avoiding environmental catastrophe on the choices of individual women. Although the Navdanya mission includes advocacy for policy change in addition to working for social change on the level of the individual, the focus on women as more responsible environmental actors due to their reproductive roles places undue burden on an already overburdened population in relation to the effects of climate change. Research has linked women's interests with those of ecology through the differentiated impacts of ecological shocks on women and men, as well as the impacts of gendered institutional structures on environmental justice. However, simply linking the interests of women and ecology does not necessitate that the burden of restoring the natural environment should be placed on women alone. Buckingham and Kulcur (2009) showed in their study of waste management that gendered institutional structures and a failure to interrogate inequality within the household compounds environmental injustice. Furthermore, Mitchell, Tanner, and Lussier (2007) showed

that the psychosocial impacts of flooding in the Ganga river basin in India were compounded for women due to their greater familial responsibilities. Although Navdanya staff members emphasize women's domestic responsibilities as evidence that women play a key position as environmental stewards, it is precisely women's position as caretakers within traditional gender hierarchies that compounds their vulnerability to environmental disaster.

Similarly, Sturgeon (1999) critiqued white U.S. ecofeminists for having an essentialist worldview, one that assumes similarities between groups in such a way that obscures important differences within groups. One example of this pointed out by Sturgeon is the construction of women as the nurturing mother as a natural fact rather than as a culturally constructed social characteristic. This frame of the nurturing mother, used by staff members at Navdanya, is one that has been historically used to limit women to the domestic sphere (Sturgeon 1999, p.257-8). However, Sturgeon (1999), noting Shiva's influence on the essentialized nature of Third World women in U.S. ecofeminist philosophy, also notes the positive potential of ecofeminism as a strategic discourse within international politics. Sturgeon (1999, p.266) identifies three theoretical possibilities for the strategic deployment of ecofeminism despite its essentializing nature: 1) it identifies Third World women as experts, 2) the contradiction between feminist and anti-racist intentions of ecofeminism and their desire to idealize nature, women, and indigenous peoples produces opportunities to debate the essentialist notions of development discourse, and 3) ecofeminism inserts feminist demands and analyses within the discourse of environmentalisms at an important historical moment. Sturgeon (1999, p.274) concludes with the idea that as a strategic tool in the feminist movements, we may need to tolerate essentialist rhetoric in activist efforts that call women from different locations together to act against power.

In light of this framework, the highly gendered division of labor at Navdanya and the essentialist rhetoric that accompanies it can be understood as a strategic choice for the organization, which is seeking to mobilize the traditional agricultural roles of women to increase their economic power and legitimize their knowledge in the agricultural sector on a global scale. Applying a transnational feminist framework to Sturgeon's analysis of ecofeminism shows that the individual experiences and perspectives of different actors at Navdanya, including their position within colonization and patriarchy, influence how they strategically mobilize gender to achieve their interests within the organization.

Although employing many men as staff members, Navdanya is ultimately a women-centric movement that mobilizes women in villages, across India, and in Western countries to work towards a mission of land, food, and seed sovereignty. The mission and work of Navdanya stands at odds with liberal, market-centric feminist politics of development and imagines a world where women have access to land to grow their own food using indigenous seeds and agricultural methods, freeing them from the market forces of globalization rather than ensnaring them within corporatized development. The essentialized rhetoric of ecofeminism both reifies gender hierarchies that position women as more vulnerable to environmental injustice than men and lends legitimacy to the indigenous agricultural knowledge of Indian women who otherwise are disempowered by the forces of Western colonization and patriarchy.

Chapter Three

Bureaucratizing the Revolution:

Gender and Sustainability in Twin Oaks Intentional Community

INTRODUCTION

Quietly tucked away several miles down country roads from what seems like a typical small-town in rural Virginia, sits 350 acres of land communally owned and managed by around 90 adults who share almost all of their income, expenses, and assets. A small village in its own right, Twin Oaks Intentional Community is a nearly self-sufficient commune founded in 1967 and is easily the most successful intentional community to come out of the 1960s. Originally consisting of 123 acres, eight people, a small cottage, and a couple of outbuildings on a rundown tobacco farm (Komar 1983), Twin Oaks today is a thriving community of 85 adults and 10 children with seven community houses, multiple industrial buildings, a community center, a school, several acres of organic gardens, and even a graveyard for the several people who chose to spend their last days at Twin Oaks. Twin Oakers grow their own food, run their own businesses, raise their children, fall in love and create their own culture. They do all this with both their carbon footprint and income about 80% lower per capita than that of the average Virginia resident.

Figure 5: An aerial view of the main entrance to Twin Oaks (Twin Oaks "Photo Gallery: Land and Buildings" n.d.)

Twin Oaks was founded in Louisa, Virginia, as an egalitarian, secular community situated halfway between the urban centers of Richmond and Charlottesville. The community was originally modeled after behavioral psychologist B.F. Skinner's science fiction novel *Walden Two*, which inspired the concept of egalitarianism, the non-hierarchical structure and many of the social and economic systems of the commune. Skinner's behaviorist utopia promoted positive reinforcement and the restructuring of the social environment to eliminate the violence and chaos of modern life. Such a utopia would have plenty of leisure time and a noncompetitive economy, according to Skinner. Although Twin Oaks today has largely abandoned the theory and the ideology of behaviorism, it does retain much of Skinner's structure, such as the planner-manager system for decision-making outlined below. Instead, the

community's stated values have evolved towards a focus on egalitarianism, environmental stewardship, nonviolence, cooperation, and elimination of hierarchy and oppression, including classism, racism, and patriarchy. Twin Oaks is not quite utopia yet - but has the feel of a utopian community in many elements. It is a peaceful community with a noncompetitive economy. No money is exchanged internally. Community members choose how to spend most of their time, and own and reap the products of their labor, with no exploitation or hoarding of resources.

Adult members of Twin Oaks all join through a membership process that entails a three-week visitor period, an interview with the Community Membership Team (CMT) and spending at least one month away from the community while their application is considered. All members may vote on whether to accept any incoming member, although not all members regularly participate in the process. After acceptance, there is a six-month provisional membership period, during which the new member enjoys most of the rights and responsibilities of full members except that they may not vote or participate in the vetoing of planner's decisions, and they must incur the costs of any pre-existing medical conditions. Through this process, Twin Oakers are able to exercise control over who joins their community - applicants and new members must demonstrate that they are able to fit into the labor system and culture of Twin Oaks - and can be rejected based on "no" votes from just a few members. During the application process, the applicant may be required to address issues such as pets, legal concerns, health, and mental health before being accepted. In this way, the community helps new members prepare themselves for the transition to commune life. Full members enjoy the guarantee of housing, food, and full coverage of their medical expenses for the duration of their time at Twin Oaks. Such is the catchphrase of Twin Oaks, using their community's gender neutral pronoun "co" (short for communard), "From each according to co's ability, to each according to co's need."

This chapter will discuss the organization of Twin Oaks as an income-sharing community. I explain how the social structure and culture of the community create a more sustainable and gender egalitarian model for society. I begin by introducing the community's labor system, decision-making structure, and living arrangements. Next, I will discuss how the division of labor and social arrangements at Twin Oaks are key factors in sustainability and feminism within the community. Finally, I discuss the implications of these findings for gendered organization theory and envisioning sustainable, egalitarian futures.

Organization of Twin Oaks

Twin Oaks is a member of the Foundation for Intentional Community and was the founding member of the Federation of Egalitarian Communities. As a member of these organizations, Twin Oaks is a part of a network of intentional communities in the United States and around the world. The community is an income-sharing commune, which means that the total income of the community is shared amongst all members who decide collectively how that money is spent. Members also collectively own the community's vehicles, houses, land, and other assets.

The complexity of the policies and decision-making processes at Twin Oaks has led some members to lightheartedly describe the community as "bureaucratizing the revolution". Decision-making in the community is decentralized through a planner-manager system based on Skinner's *Walden Two.* The executive decision-making body consists of three planners who serve 18-month staggered terms and make long-term decisions, handle crises and emergencies, and make exceptions to policies or membership agreements based on written community input. New planners are selected by the current planners with community input. Planners attempt to make decisions based on the needs and opinions of the community members and can be

overruled if the community-at-large disagrees with their decisions. Candidates for planner can be vetoed by 20% of the full membership of the community. Any planner decision can be overruled via an override by a simple majority of the full membership signing a petition within three weeks.

Most day-to-day decisions in the community are made by managers who oversee particular areas, such as food processing, accounting, and mental health care. Councils are made up of managers from related areas. A manager may remain in their position as long as they like or they may be asked to step down through a community process if there is discontent with their performance in the position. Once a manager position opens up, anyone can nominate themselves for the position and the council in that area will decide amongst them using community input. Community input generally takes the form of written communication on the O&I board (which alternatively stands for opinions and ideas or opinions and information depending on who I asked) in the main dining hall, Zhankoye (ZK). The O&I board is a messaging board where members can post opinion papers on any issue of concern. Other members will write their input on the topic before the paper is taken to the manager for a particular area or the planners who will then make a decision based on that input. The community does not regularly hold meetings, but they can be called in relation to particular topics when there is enough support. Even then, decisions are never made at meetings. Meetings are discussion forums and then decisions are ultimately made by the manager or planners.

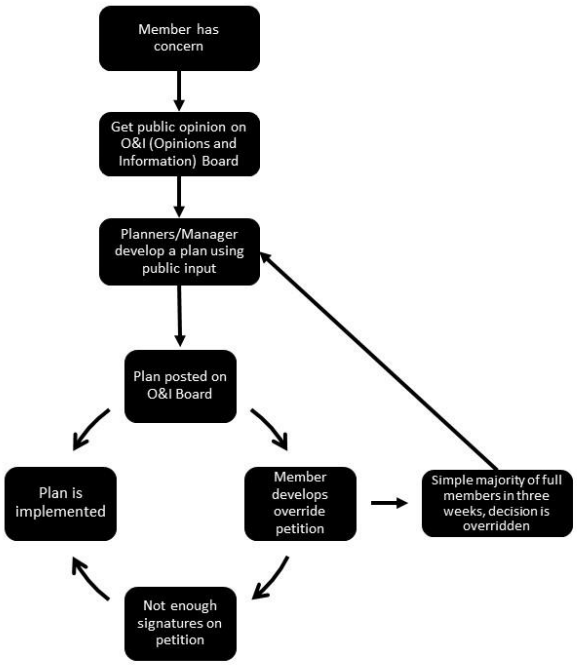

Figure 6: Twin Oaks Decision-Making Process

The labor system at Twin Oaks is as complex as the decision-making process. The community prides itself on practicing egalitarianism through the labor system, which is described on the website (Twin Oaks "More About" n.d.):

> A trust-based system in which all work is valued equally. Its purpose is to organize work and share it equitably, giving each member as much flexibility and choice as possible. Work is not seen as just a means to an end; we try to make it an enjoyable part of our lives.

The ideal of all work being valued equally refers to the value in hours - Twin Oakers are required to work 45.5 hours per week. For almost all kinds of work, an hour is an hour - whether you are cleaning the toilets in your house or managing one of the community's primary income-generating businesses. Actively participating in the labor system is a requirement of members; members are required to make quota on average. Each member's labor balance is tracked weekly

and members who work under quota face consequences for being “in the labor hole”. These consequences happen on an escalating scale, starting with a contract to work extra hours to get out of the hole and leading to expulsion if not corrected. Members who work over quota accrue hours that can be used for vacation on or off the farm. Working quota guarantees each member 3.3 weeks of vacation per year.

Members can choose areas of labor that interest them and they do not have to do the same jobs every day. They submit requests to the labor manager every week who makes the schedules. Members have the option to have scheduled work or more varied and flexible work schedules as long as they are consistently meeting quota. All members are required to do some work in the tofu hut, the community’s current main source of income, unless they have a health or other exemption.

The system is transparent, with all member labor balances being publicly available. There is a complex budgeting process that determines how labor hours are allocated into each of Twin Oak’s 100 different labor areas every year. The budgets set by the budgeting team every year based on community input determine what counts as labor and how much of each type of labor is creditable each year.

Twin Oaks also has policies in place for family planning. There are a finite number of spaces for children in the community, currently set at a 5:1 adult to child ratio. Raising children at Twin Oaks is a controversial subject because some members view it as an overly resource intensive endeavor. All members who are sexually active and capable of becoming pregnant are required to be on some accepted form of birth control, although members are not required to choose between leaving the community and having the baby in case of an accidental pregnancy. Members who want to have a new child at Twin Oaks, either through birth or adoption, must

have lived in the community for at least two years, have worked in child care in the community for at least one year, live in a family friendly small living group, have met with their small living group, have met with all parents of kids under five year old, and obtain community input before applying to the Child Board. The Child Board can impose additional requirements upon a member before approving them for a child if community input results in concerns. Most of the children of Twin Oaks are home-schooled although some parents choose to send their children to the local public schools as well.

Twin Oakers live in eight different residential buildings that are broken up into small living groups (SLG) - each with their own set of norms and rules determined by the members who live there. Each building is named after a historical intentional community. For example, the dining hall Zhankoye is named after a Stalin-era Jewish collective farm in Crimea. Each SLG has its own character and some have rules determining who can and cannot live there - for example only family SLGs allow children, and there is a women's SLG which is only open to women-identified individuals. The character of each SLG is also dependent on the physical space it occupies. One SLG is in a building designed to be energy efficient and environmentally friendly and another is designed for ease of access for those with limited mobility. Proximity to the center of the community also determines the SLG's character. For example, Tupelo is the furthest residential building from the main dining hall (ZK), and members residing there expressed some mixed feelings of isolation and desired privacy.

Placement in rooms is determined on a system closely resembling first-come, first-serve. When someone leaves the community or moves to a new room, the vacated room first becomes available to members of that SLG in order of the length of time they have lived there. Next, the room becomes available to other residents of the building, and finally, to the community at large.

New members of the community are placed in whatever room happens to be available when they move in and are allowed some input if multiple rooms are open. However, due to the nature of the system, it is not unusual for new members to be initially placed in some of the least desirable rooms. Every adult member of Twin Oaks has their own room, regardless of relationship status.

Demographics of Twin Oaks

Since the beginning, Twin Oaks has been a primarily white, middle-class community, a fact that does not go unnoticed by the many white members nor the few members of color. Twin Oaks is significantly whiter than the surrounding community, and has trouble recruiting and retaining members of color, despite the community's stated value of eliminating hierarchy and oppression, including racism. Kat Kinkade, a founding member of Twin Oaks, is perhaps the most well-known member of the community. She documented her experiences in *A Walden Two Experiment: The First Five Years of Twin Oaks Community* (1972) and *Is It Utopia Yet? An Insider's View of Twin Oaks Community in Its Twenty-Sixth Year* (1994). Kinkade (1994, p. 193) wrote of the lack of racial diversity at Twin Oaks:

> We certainly do not deliberately discriminate along such lines. Minority group members usually meet friendliness and welcome when they visit. You can even say they are courted for membership. Yet they seldom join, and when they do, they frequently leave after a short time.

Little has changed at Twin Oaks in the 25 years since Kinkade wrote of the lack of racial diversity at Twin Oaks. In an attempt to address the lack of racial diversity in the community, one member put forth a proposal publicly on the O&I board to create a race/ethnicity quota, accept families of color (families with children are rarely accepted to the community), and to hold anti-racist workshops. This prompted a discussion about how the community could

successfully recruit more people of color, ranging from creating a handbook on micro-aggressions to putting a cap on white members in the community. In the past, the community has paid for and hosted anti-racism workshops, including during the yearly Communities Conference, which paid a presenter to give a workshop on increasing racial diversity in intentional communities. The community has also allowed members to receive labor credit for work towards increasing community diversity. The community has a recurrent internal conversation about addressing the lack of racial diversity, but larger policy changes or efforts towards changing cultural norms have yet to be instituted.

Research at Twin Oaks

Visitors to Twin Oaks reside in the specially designated visitor building, Aurora. Visitors wishing to participate in the visitor program must schedule with the Twin Oaks Community Visitor Program (CVP) in advance and commit to staying for all three weeks of the program. Once in the program, they are expected to abide by community norms and meet the labor quota every week. As part of the labor quota, visitors participate in a series of orientations on social life, community values, community governance, the labor system, the child program, and various other topics. The purpose of the visitor program is to bring in potential new members to the community which has a turnover of about 20 members per year. On average, about half of the visitors to Twin Oaks will apply for membership and about half of those accepted will join the community.

I spent three weeks at Twin Oaks as a member of the visitor program conducting interviews and participant observation. There is a sliding scale fee for participating in the visitor program of $50-$250, although visitors may also participate if they are unable to pay the fees with no questions asked. All introductory letters from visitors were posted for the community

before our arrival, so everyone was aware of my status as a researcher. I resided in Aurora with the six other visitors, none of whom ultimately ended up applying for membership. I participated in the labor system which required me to meet a quota of 44 hours per week. I was assigned some tasks based on my expressed interests, including gardening, childcare, cooking, chicken care, and compost maintenance. I also attended schedule orientations every week which counted towards my labor quota. With the permission of the Community Membership Team, my interviews counted towards labor hours for both me and the participants as Community Outreach hours. I also attended a planner meeting and various social events and ate all meals with the community during my stay.

In the next section, I will discuss my main findings about gender and sustainability at Twin Oaks. First, I discuss how pooling resources contributes to members of the community having a lower carbon footprint on average than the United States as a whole. I then discuss how pooling resources is related to the gendered division of labor at Twin Oaks through the egalitarian labor system. The connection between labor, gender, and sustainability is highlighted through the processes in which members are compensated for domestic labor and encouraged to perform non-traditional labor for their gender. Next, I discuss how these economic arrangements are upheld by social arrangements, including polyamory and collective childcare, which culturally support resource sharing.

Figure 7: Aurora, the visitor building at Twin Oaks (Twin Oaks "Photo Gallery: Land and Buildings" n.d.)

SUSTAINABILITY AND GENDER AT TWIN OAKS

Members of Twin Oaks believe that living in community is an inherently more sustainable way for humans to live in relation to the natural environment. By pooling resources, members consume less individually and subsequently reduce their impact on the earth. For example, by housing around 85 adult members and 10 children in seven shared houses, each individual is consuming significantly less in terms of electricity and heating compared to the average household size of 2.5 in the United States (U.S. Census Bureau). The same logic applies to other resources, such as gasoline. Twin Oakers share about twelve communal vehicles, compared to about 800 vehicles per 1000 people in the United States overall. One result of this is that Twin Oakers drove less than 3000 miles per capita in 2015, compared to the average of 15,000 miles per capita in the United States overall that year. Whereas living sustainably is often

considered to be an economically privileged choice in the industrialized United States, Twin Oakers had a per capita carbon footprint that is about 20% of the US average while also living on a per capita income about 77% less than the US average in 2015. Resource sharing in this manner is a cultural distinction between Twin Oaks and mainstream capitalism which encourages consumption and luxury as symbols of status. Excessive consumption is discouraged by the culture of Twin Oaks, where objects of envy such as luxury cars and televisions are explicitly forbidden by membership agreements. The ability of Twin Oakers to live in a more sustainable manner than the US population at large is directly related to cultural norms that prioritize communal well-being over individual resource accumulation.

Reducing the impact on the earth by living in community is largely a result of social arrangements that free up individual time and resources for sustainability practices through a shared economic life among members. By pooling income and resources, members of Twin Oaks can devote a significant portion of the labor budget of the community to non-income producing work, such as organic farming - which allows the community to produce most of its own food. Community members also share assets such as cars and houses and do their own maintenance, reducing the environmental impact of the production and maintenance per capita of these resources.

Figure 8: Members installing the Solar Panel Array (Calta-Star, 2019)

The community's ability to engage in environmental stewardship is directly related to the practices of egalitarianism in labor compensation, disruption of the nuclear family, and non-traditionally gendered labor roles. Twin Oaks community documents state that the lifestyle practiced in the community reflects values of equality and nonviolence, including goals "to sustain and expand a community...which is not sexist or racist..." (Twin Oaks "More About" n.d.) Furthermore:

> As a feminist culture, at Twin Oaks we tend to disregard traditional gender roles and behavior. Women and men choose their roles in the community based on their interests, strengths, and passions, not on anyone else's preconceived notions. Women and men operate chainsaws and drive tractors, and men and women cook and care for children. We all wear clothing we find comfortable--pants for working in, skirts for coolness or festivity, heedless of mainstream ideas of "acceptable" fashion choices.

The community is proud of being a feminist organization. The community disregards traditional gender roles in the division of labor, disrupts the heterosexual, monogamous couple as the basis for the nuclear family, and equitably compensates all work, including care work that makes up "the second shift" for women in mainstream American society.

The community's feminist ideology is tied to the noncompetitive, resource sharing nature of the economic system. Collectivizing community resources means that "the group can have access to more resources than each individual could alone" (Twin Oaks "About Income Sharing" n.d.). This system "avoids a luxury economy and many of the pitfalls/tragedies of the class system and of economic privilege" (Twin Oaks "About Income Sharing" n.d.). By collectivizing resources, labor hours are freed up for group members to pursue other activities and this results in an improvement in quality of life. Therefore, the economic system is less reliant on the unpaid and underpaid labor of women to sustain individual economic privilege, and the community can intentionally consume resources in a more environmentally sustainable manner. The elimination of patriarchy and prioritization of environmental stewardship are made more possible by a collectivized and noncompetitive economic system.

In what follows, I will explore in more detail two feminist goals that work to uphold sustainability practices in the community. First, I will explore gender in the Twin Oaks labor system as it relates to the division of labor. Then, I will discuss the social arrangements that support this economic system, including polyamory and collective childcare.

Gender in the Labor System

One way in which Twin Oaks puts the community's feminist ideology into practice is through a concerted effort to disrupt the traditional gendered division of labor. The labor system of Twin Oaks does this in two ways: (1) encouraging members to do work that is non-traditional

for their gender and (2) considering domestic work traditionally done by women as part of the labor system. Twin Oakers often point to the labor system as evidence of the community's value of egalitarianism. Joanna, a member of the Community Visitor Program team and self-identified feminist, equates egalitarianism with feminism, which she sees as being expressed structurally through the labor system. She called the labor system "an elegant thing of beauty." She referred to the concept of equal pay for equal work to explain her understanding of the labor system as inherently feminist. Equal pay for equal work at Twin Oaks means that non-income producing labor is valued equally to income-producing labor - equal credits are given for an hour working in the tofu hut as for cooking, cleaning, or working in the childcare center. In mainstream society, domestic labor which is typically done by women is undercompensated or not compensated at all. At Twin Oaks, these types of labor are credited equally under the labor system. The lack of distinction between different kinds of work means that there is no concern about wage inequality, and it also works to eliminate class distinctions because all members of the community are provided with the same resources regardless of the perceived value of their labor. This eliminates the possibility of discrimination in the valuing of work based on the sex composition or gender typing of a certain kind of work.

To Ana, who has lived at Twin Oaks for nineteen years during which she has raised two children with her husband, the fact that she gets credited for raising her children is a great improvement from mainstream society. She compares her life in Twin Oaks to what it would be like working in a traditional job and raising children:

> In the mainstream world, parents just have to work twice as hard. You have to work more to earn more money for your kids, and then you do all the work of parenting on top of that. So, living in a situation where a big part of what I essentially get paid for by the

> community is raising my own children, I think is great. And I also do a lot of domestic work like cleaning. And to me, it's huge, that that counts as much as work as anything else. I think that's an important feminist thing.

Ana considers the fact that she gets full labor credit for her domestic work other than child care and half labor credit for the time she spends raising her children to be a vast improvement from the resources she would be offered as a parent in most jobs in the United States. Ana is also a garden honcho, which means that she leads shifts working in the garden to produce the community's organic food supply. Although Ana does very little income-producing work, she is provided with the same resources as any other member of the community. Ana is empowered to engage in environmental stewardship and motherhood through Twin Oaks' labor system, which allows the community to be less patriarchal and more sustainable than the surrounding society.

At Twin Oaks, the divisions between the private and public sphere are essentially non-existent. This is possible because the labor system is completely controlled by the community members and there is no room for the exploitation of labor in the system. As Joanna points out, "At Twin Oaks, people are born at home, they're educated at home, we work at home for ourselves. And when we die, we're buried in our graveyard. It's beyond the means of production, because we own and are doing all of that for ourselves, we can do it the way we want, and according to our values, that are by definition feminist, that are sustainable." Twin Oakers are not accountable to any outside employers and therefore there is no distinction between home life and work life. This allows for the dissolution of distinctions between care work and income-generating work, because both are sustaining the community without necessitating an appeal to corporate or capitalist interests. Twin Oaks as both home and workplace, where resources and decisions are shared amongst all members, does not rely on the exploitation of surplus value

from its laborers, as do capitalist organizations. Therefore, the economic conditions of the community favor feminism and sustainability rather than relying on the exploitation of women and the environment.

The community also encourages members to become trained in non-traditional labor for their gender. Seeing the disruption of the traditional gendered division of labor is part of what attracted Reyna, a queer woman, to join the community in 1991. She describes coming to visit Twin Oaks for the first time, “So it's just amazing to be out in the country and then feeling super excited seeing a woman drive by on the tractor. Yeah, I’d never thought about it before, but I'd never seen a woman drive a tractor. It just, you know, opened up this world of possibilities to me that I hadn't really, on an emotional level, realized was really possible.” Reyna was empowered by visiting Twin Oaks and finding a place where she could participate in types of labor that she felt excluded from in mainstream society. After learning how to operate the Twin Oaks sawmill, she left the community for a period of time to buy and operate her own sawmill, something she doesn’t believe she would ever have been able to do if she hadn’t been a part of the community. Now she has returned to Twin Oaks and teaches workshops for women, non-binary people, and queer people to learn how to operate power tools. She says that “I'm very much encouraging people to get out of gender roles and try things that society would not have ordinarily encouraged them to try, things that they've been marginalized from, denied or not having the confidence instilled in them to do.” In the past, when women in the community have had trouble breaking into certain labor areas, the community has instituted gender ratios to encourage those areas to utilize more women’s labor. Today at Twin Oaks it is still not unusual to see a woman operating heavy machinery or working in or managing building maintenance.

At Twin Oaks, the labor system is understood as being a primary site in the resistance of gender inequality. The system is structured to value all kinds of work equally, eliminating the hierarchical sorting of jobs in capitalist society that has consistently undervalued women's work. Furthermore, the community has cultural norms that encourage members to learn skills that are non-traditional for their gender in mainstream society, and policies that support these norms. Gender equality in the labor system is understood as being intimately tied to ecological sustainability, which are both made possible in the case of Twin Oaks by equal ownership of resources among members. Whereas capitalist systems depend on the exploitation of women and the environment to extract surplus value, sustainable systems at Twin Oaks allow the community to benefit from the labor of its members without exploiting them. Furthermore, because work responsibilities are for the most part not gendered and valued equally even when there is a gender imbalance, Twin Oakers do not experience gender inequality as compounding environmental injustice as is the case in capitalist society.

Disrupting the Nuclear Family

The economic arrangements at Twin Oaks that make possible the elimination of patriarchal labor models and the prioritization of environmental stewardship are supported by cultural arrangements in the community. Twin Oak's cultural values disrupt the traditional nuclear family model of two heterosexual parents who are solely responsible for raising their own biological children. The disruption of the nuclear family at Twin Oaks takes the form of 1) sharing resources across non-familial networks, 2) the communal raising of children, 3) a cultural norm of polyamory. Rather than the individualistic culture of the nuclear family, where a heterosexual couple generates income, divides labor, and consumes resources within a closed network, Twin Oaks has a culture of sharing, non-competitiveness, and non-possessiveness

which determines both the distribution of resources and social life in the community. Members of the community are empowered to practice individual freedom in terms of self-expression and relationships, while remaining accountable for the impacts of their choices on the community at large.

Polyamory is the cultural norm in the community. Relationship norms in the community prioritize non-possessiveness and sexual freedom. As long as a relationship is consensual between adults, members are expected to be tolerant of all relationship models and orientations. Kinkade, one of the founders of Twins Oaks, along with current members, considered the community to be somewhat of a safe haven for women to explore (or not explore) relationships. Kinkade (1994, p.183) attributes some of the lack of support for monogamy in the community to feminism:

> A woman is encouraged to feel complete in herself and not dependent upon a man. She is urged not to arrange her life to suit her partner's, nor subordinate her other interests to the success of her relationship. Regardless of the rights or wrongs of these attitudes, a woman living at Twin Oaks, where these ideas are strong and frequently repeated, will think about them, and they will affect her commitment to her husband or lover.

Kinkade's explanation of feminist relationship models at Twin Oaks runs counter to patriarchal culture, which encourages the domination of women and possessiveness within romantic relationships. At Twin Oaks, because the culture does not prioritize monogamy or long-term commitment in relationships but does prioritize feminism as a value, women have more control over the nature of their romantic relationships than they might in mainstream capitalist society. Joanna believes this fact can be attributed to the economic security of living in the community. To Joanna, the structure of Twin Oaks itself grants women more autonomy in their relationships:

> It's 2019, and this still happens that women are economically dependent on a man, they're stuck in a bad relationship because they are not as strong economically. That's a non-issue here, for one thing, we're not violent. So that's hopefully not going to be an issue in the first place. But if you do want to leave a relationship, you're not contingent for your housing, and food and health care on this other person who society rewards with higher income for all of that kind of stuff.

Twin Oakers are economically empowered to practice sexual freedom and prioritize consent in their relationships by the guarantee of housing, healthcare, and food in the community. Therefore, the cultural norm of polyamory at Twin Oaks is intertwined with the practice of resource sharing. Members have more freedom to move in and out of relationships without the burden of economic entanglement or housing concerns, which is especially significant for women who in mainstream society are more likely to experience lack of choice in romantic relationships due to economic concerns.

Polyamory is understood as being ideologically and materially intertwined with egalitarianism and resource sharing at Twin Oaks. Sexual freedom and non-possessiveness are the explicit values of the community at large. Kinkade (1972, p.168) wrote that "The closer people live together, the higher will be the opportunity for attraction. A commune has to take the choice between dealing with jealousy in an open way or dealing with complicated questions of sin, dalliance, adultery. I conjecture that a group norm of free choice in sexual matters is not only philosophically consistent but literally easier to manage than any compromise would be." Communities all struggle with questions of romance and sexual attraction. Twin Oaks has actively chosen to disrupt the nuclear family through a cultural norm of polyamory. This norm of

non-possessiveness in relationships is consistent with the values of material sharing without limits.

The cultural norm of polyamory also disrupts the norm of the nuclear family as it relates to taking care of children. Childcare at Twin Oaks is culturally and economically distinct from childcare in mainstream United States society. It is not uncommon for a child at Twin Oaks to have one, two, three or more primary caregivers, to have primary caregivers in polyamorous relationships or primary caregivers that change partners throughout the child's lifetime. Children at Twin Oaks also spend a significant amount of time around adults other than their primary caregivers. When a member or members at Twin Oaks decide to bring a new child into the community, the community as a whole is taking responsibility for their well-being. This is the reason for the child board at Twin Oaks, which allows the community at large to give input when an individual or set of partners decides to have a new child. By requiring new parents to obtain permission from the child board, Twin Oaks as a community is ensuring that those individuals are prepared for the responsibility of parenthood and that the community will be prepared to support both the parents and the child.

To Sam, a man at Twin Oaks with a three-year-old son, childcare at Twin Oaks is closely linked to the economics of the community. Sam, like Ana, appreciates the resources he has at Twin Oaks for taking care of his children, saying

> I think it's an amazing place to raise a kid. I think, in large part, because there are a lot of resources dedicated to kids, I mean time resources. Just the fact that I can take time, I can take labor credits for taking care of my child as can my partner, and we can sort of, you know, hire out other people to take care of the kids. It's great.

Sam appreciates the large amount of resources dedicated to raising children in the community and believes it is a good place to raise a child. Parents at Twin Oaks all seem to agree that they are far better resourced raising children at Twin Oaks than they would be raising their children as individuals in mainstream capitalist United States. The disruption of the nuclear family and culture of sharing in the community give parents and children access to more resources than most would have in mainstream society.

When discussing community sustainability, Twin Oakers point to resource sharing as the most significant single practice in reducing the community's environmental impact. Stephan, a community member, stated that by living in the community, members are already significantly lowering their environmental footprint just by sharing resources.

DISCUSSION

Twin Oaks as a Less Oppressively Gendered Organization

In this section, I will turn to feminist literature in sociology to help explain my findings about gender and sustainability at Twin Oaks. My research at Twin Oaks helps to illuminate and further refine existing research on gender and organizations. Previous work in the area of gender and organizations has focused on traditional work organizations, such as non-profits and employer-owned businesses. This section will expand on that research by providing a comparison between an alternative organizational structure at Twin Oaks and the traditional bureaucratic work organization.

Twin Oak's attempt to create a less oppressively gendered and more sustainable organization can be understood through the lens of labor. Feminist scholars often theorize about what a less oppressive society would look like. Acker (1990) identifies work organizations as a

significant site in the reproduction of gender inequality (and therefore, potentially a significant site in the resistance of gender inequality). She theorizes that organizational structure is not gender neutral, but instead built into work organizations, which privilege masculinity. Acker argues that the gendered division of labor is a key component of capitalist patriarchy, and that a less oppressively gendered society can only exist if hierarchy is abolished and workers run things themselves. Britton (2000) argues that in order to developed a framework for less-oppressively gendered organizations, researchers must develop a better understanding of the levels and methods through which organizations are gendered. Sobering et. al (2014) identify communes as a significant site of study for reimagining the gendered structure of traditional work organizations, especially in that they address the unequal distribution of unpaid care work and the devaluation of work traditionally associated with women.

My research at Twin Oaks supports Acker's (1990) claims that an end of gender inequality in the workplace will require a complete restructuring of work organizations towards worker ownership and the elimination of hierarchy. The egalitarian nature of the organization supports gender equality on multiple levels: the division of labor in technical skill, decision-making positions, and domestic responsibilities; eliminating the barrier between the private and public sphere; and an understanding of workers as embodied beings. By providing women with opportunities to learn skills that they might not otherwise have access to, such as in Reyna's case, Twin Oaks is not just ungendering the division of labor, but also eliminating the power hierarchies associated with men's claim to technical skill. Encouraging members to take on non-traditional work for their genders has the result of allowing women and non-binary people to rise more easily into decision-making and management positions within the community than might be the case in mainstream society. The bureaucratic processes in place such as the ability to

appeal the decision of a manager, as well as the ideological practice of non-discrimination based on gender and sexual orientation, work to uphold less oppressively gendered practices. Members are credited in the system for domestic responsibilities, which traditionally are the domain of women who are typically underpaid or not paid at all for this labor. Under the labor system, members of the community are credited for sick-time, pension hours based on biological age, doctor and dentist visits, and domestic labor, including cooking, cleaning and childcare performed for the community.

However, Twin Oaks also illuminates limitations in the commune model for achieving an egalitarian society. Acker's (1990) theory of gendered organizations cannot explain the continued whiteness of the organization despite efforts on the part of the community to eliminate racism. The fact that Twin Oaks remains a mostly white organization despite being nominally open to new members of all races speaks to the difficulty of eliminating oppression that is embodied, historical and built into the very foundations of society. It also speaks to the fact that building a less oppressively gendered organization must address intersecting oppressions such as race and class in order to be effective. Gendered organization theory must be expanded to address how particular solutions for building less oppressively gendered organizations, such as ecological intentional communities, might work for white women without addressing the needs of those with intersecting oppressions. Further research might address how ecological intentional communities reproduce or challenge racism against women of color.

Family at Twin Oaks

Cultural arrangements at Twin Oaks uphold the feminist ideology and sustainable practices. Specifically, the disruption of the nuclear family operates as the cultural foundation for the sharing of resources in the community by encouraging familial models that support this

arrangement. The nuclear family is tied to the conception of private property and has aided in the oppression of women since its origins (Engels 1942). The nuclear family model has relied on the feminization of care work to support the division of domestic and income-earning work.

Research on polyamory has shown that polyamorous families and partners pool resources, care work, and parenting responsibilities across multiple adults. Sheff (2010) found that polyamorous families in mainstream society frequently pool resources which allows them to have access to more financial capital and more flexibility in labor arrangements. The fact that these arrangements closely mirror the income-sharing model of Twin Oaks illuminates how polyamory culturally supports resource sharing in the community. Polyamory as a relationship model strengthens community values of sharing, egalitarianism, and non-possessiveness among adults, and supports the communal way in which children are raised in the community. Whereas research on polyamory in mainstream society has shown that polyamorous families face challenges regarding the division of domestic labor which are aggravated by economic concerns (Klesse 2013), families at Twin Oaks are supported economically and culturally by the egalitarian nature of the community.

CONCLUSION

Twin Oaks serves as a model for a less oppressively gendered and more sustainable society, where patriarchy, hierarchy and capitalism are undermined by resource sharing, the ungendering of work, and the disruption of the nuclear family. Egalitarian work arrangements attempt to eliminate hierarchy between different types of labor. Although the community has not achieved this utopian vision, certainly not in terms of racial equality, the democratic processes in the community function to allow all members to participate in the project of continual improvement. In the community, work is no longer valued solely based on the income-earning

potential of the laborer. Members are empowered to engage in care work both for the family and for the earth free of the economic burden of capitalistic pressures. Environmental stewardship is supported by economic arrangements that discourage overconsumption and resource hoarding. Instead, members engage in the production of sustainable resources such as solar energy and organic food. Work is ungendered by organizational arrangements that aim to equally value care work to income-generating work and encourage members to engage in non-traditionally gendered labor. Work arrangements are supported by cultural arrangements that disrupt the nuclear family model - polyamory, communal child rearing, and values of non-possessiveness and sharing. The resource sharing encouraged by these cultural arrangements allows for an extreme reduction in environmental footprint per capita compared to mainstream capitalist society. Members have all their basic needs met by an economic system that allows for flexibility based on individual needs and circumstances. At Twin Oaks, environmental stewardship, egalitarianism, and feminism are all intertwined – a vision for a society that allows members to live sustainability and free of patriarchy without the economic burden of life under capitalism.

Chapter Four

Comparing and Contrasting Two Feminist Visions for Sustainable Futures

INTRODUCTION

Feminist scholars and climate scientists have called for a massive restructuring of society in order to bring about the end of patriarchy and avoid total ecological collapse. Avoiding climate catastrophe calls not just for technical adjustments, but for a complete rethinking of work arrangements, gendered structures, and the allocation of resources. Navdanya Bioconservation Farm and Twin Oaks Intentional Community are two communities that attempt to practice feminism and radical sustainability and can serve as models for a post-patriarchy, post-climate change world. Each community has a unique vision for social change. Navdanya imagines a post-colonial world, where women are recognized and rewarded for their role in environmental stewardship and indigenous agricultural practices and biodiversity are widespread. Twin Oaks imagines a post-gender world, where all people have their needs met regardless of gender, race, ability status, or any other categorical identity and people work together to live in companionship with the earth through community and sharing. Both communities are real utopias, meaning that they provide real-life examples of alternative societies that embody our deepest aspirations for the world while being attentive to the unintended consequences and complexities of realizing those ideals (Wright 2013). Considering these two communities together can help scholars to understand the prefigurative politics of sustainable, less oppressively gendered organizations, or the ways in which these organizations attempt to embody the society that they want to create.

In this chapter, I will compare and contrast Navdanya Bioconservation Farm and Twin Oaks Intentional Community as feminist ecological intentional communities. I will examine how

both communities vary in their feminist visions, historical context, and philosophies of social change, yet both are real utopias that can serve as models for alternative social arrangements that are more sustainable and egalitarian than the capitalist status quo. I have chosen to focus on these communities' feminist visions because both of these communities provide examples of how creating a sustainable society is intrinsically linked to anti-capitalist and feminism. The historical context of each community illuminates the ways anti-capitalist feminisms vary based on time and place. There is no one-size-fits-all feminist vision, but multiple historized visions based on the needs of specific communities and the political and economic context in which they are operating. These differing feminist visions and historical contexts mean that differing methodologies of social change are employed in order to combat ecological destruction and gender inequality. Understanding the dimensions on which feminist vision, historical contexts, and methodologies of social change vary between these two communities is one way for social scientists to contend with the realities of achieving utopian visions of a more sustainable and equitable future.

FEMINIST VISIONS

Navdanya and Twin Oaks are both explicitly feminist communities that understand gender as a central mechanism for building a more sustainable society. However, each organization understands the goals of feminism differently based on their political-economic and historical circumstances. While Navdanya embodies an essentialist understanding of gender that prescribes particular roles for women and men in environmental stewardship, Twin Oaks attempts to eliminate gendered differences altogether. Actors at Navdanya understand women as playing a key role in environmental stewardship because of their natural and historical relationship to the earth practiced in the gendered division of agricultural labor that has allowed

them to be the primary keepers of indigenous agricultural knowledge in India. The organizational goals of Navdanya also tie ecofeminism to anti-capitalism, believing that women's empowerment and autonomy are linked to reducing dependency on the market. Meanwhile, members of Twin Oaks understand gender through the lens of egalitarianism. Twin Oakers believe that sustainability is achieved through the elimination of hierarchy, including gendered hierarchies in the division of labor, which enhances the opportunity for environmental stewardship by undermining the capitalist tendencies towards infinite expansion and resource hoarding. Although they have radically different feminist ideologies, Twin Oaks and Navdanya both hold explicitly anti-capitalist and anti-consumerist feminist visions.

The differences between understandings of gender in relation to environmental stewardship at Twin Oaks and Navdanya can be understood through the lens of transnational feminism. Transnational feminist theory is concerned with issues of "race, sexuality and labor; geography and geopolitics; imperial and colonial histories and legacies; neoliberalism; and state and nation-building" as they have to do with complicating identities and relations in regards to gender and sexuality (Patil 2011, p. 540). Particularly, transnational feminism aims to uncover ethnocentric universalism in regard to feminist discourse. Mohanty (1988, p.64) challenged the category of women as a coherent unit of analysis, stating: "the assumption of women as an already constituted and coherent group with identical interests and desires, regardless of class, ethnic or racial location, implies a notion of gender or sexual difference or even patriarchy which can be applied universally and cross-culturally." Taken in the context of transnational feminism, feminists operating in vastly different political, economic and geographic circumstances are expected to have different goals in regard to feminist liberation. Although Navdanya and Twin Oaks have seemingly different understandings of gender - the former being essentialist and the

latter being a complete disruption of gender roles - they each are working towards feminist liberation and environmental stewardship within their own circumstances.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Twin Oaks and the Counterculture Movement of the 1960s

Twin Oaks evolved out of the counterculture movement of the 1960s. Kat Kinkade, one of the founders of Twin Oaks, attributes the feminist ideology of the community to the political environment of the United States during the community's early years. About sexism, Kinkade wrote: "We weren't conscious of this problem when we started the Community, but when Women's Liberation consciousness hit the rest of the nation, Twin Oaks naturally started thinking about it too" (1973, p. 169).

Writing about Freedom Summer volunteers but extrapolating to the New Left political movement of the 1960s, McAdam (1988, p.144) wrote: "to be truly free politically as well as personally, the volunteers had to work through their sexual 'hang-ups.'" Communal living as a project of the New Left was "not primarily a means of sharing expenses or advancing one's career through fraternal contacts but carrying out a politically 'meaningful' experiment in communal living...involvement on this level required a painful self-examination as well as the alteration of social values and self-image that few outside such conditions of struggle ever find necessary to undergo" (McAdam 1988, p.144). Therefore, the political economy of the United States in the 1960s provided a context for sexual liberation within communal living projects.

The same counterculture movement that McAdam wrote about took hold of Twin Oaks in 1968 when a large number of young people joined that community: "from then until now sexual freedom has been the Community's norm, both in theory and in practice" (Kinkade, 1973, p. 165). The politics of sexual liberation took hold at Twin Oaks and evolved into the vision of

eliminating gendered hierarchies that the community still holds today. Kinkade (1973, p.171) wrote of the community's feminist ideology: "What we are aiming for is to relate to each other simply as people, appreciating each other as human beings without regard to gender." The counter-cultural ideology of the New Left along with the original egalitarian principles of the Twin Oaks community merged to create an anti-capitalist conception of feminism which aims to eliminate gender roles within work and the family.

Although the community still confronts dilemmas when attempting to eliminate hierarchy, they have come closer to achieving the utopian ideal of eliminating gender hierarchies than mainstream society in the United States. According to Kinkade (1973, p. 171), "Even now we are closer to this ideal than most places. We have no sex roles in our work. Both men and women cook and clean and wash dishes; both women and men drive trucks and tractors, repair fences, load hay, slaughter cattle. Managerial responsibility is divided almost exactly equally." In terms of the gendered division of labor, both care work and income-producing labor has been rendered nearly free of gendered hierarchies at Twin Oaks.

Navdanya and India's Green Revolution

While the United States was experiencing the Civil Rights Movement and the politics of the New Left, India was undergoing the Green Revolution in agriculture, which effectively globalized and industrialized Indian's agrarian agriculture system. The Green Revolution vastly increased the nation's agricultural exports and commodity production. However, the industrialization of India's agricultural sector ultimately had dire unintended consequences for the country's natural environment and the economic well- being of small farmers. The increased use of biotechnology in India was connected to a wave of farmer suicides (Thomas and De

Tavernier 2017). The Green Revolution also led to an increase in the usage of fertilizers and pesticides, which caused human-health problems, soil degradation, disrupted aquatic ecosystems, and decreased overall biodiversity, among many other environmental consequences (Pimentel and Pimentel 1990).

The Green Revolution in India particularly impacted the role of women in agriculture, who have traditionally been the experts and managers of traditional ecological knowledge, but many of whom have lost control of the land, their means of production, and been cast into the role of wage laborers under the Western market economy (Sobha 2007). Feminists in India, therefore, were motivated not by the politics of sexual liberation as Twin Oaks was during its founding in the 1960s, but the aftermath of the Green Revolution as it affected women's role in the agriculture sector and the biodiversity of rural India. Sobha (2007, p.111) states that the fundamental cause of poverty in India arises out of the scarcity of biomass resources and that environmental degradation affects women first and hardest. Therefore, restoring ecological balance and increasing sustainable agricultural practices plays an important role in increasing women's safety and autonomy in agrarian agricultural communities in India. Strengthening the long-term sustainability of development activities also means recognizing women as experts in biodiversity conservation. As Sturgeon (1999) notes, ecofeminism plays a key role in identifying third-world women as experts in environmental stewardship at a time when women's participation is important for influencing globalized development programs. Navdanya's focus on promoting women's role in environmental stewardship must be taken in the context of the political and economic environment that the organization is operating in.

NAVDANYA AND TWIN OAKS AS SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

Both Twin Oaks and Navdanya envision a societal end to existing capitalist, patriarchal institutions. Navdanya most closely mirrors the traditional social movement - the organization gathers people in groups to discuss grievances, plans protests, and uses legal challenges and direct action to achieve movement goals (Caniglia and Carmin 2005). Twin Oaks also attempts to achieve social change in the way humans relate to each other and their natural environment, although the tactic of creating alternative societal structures rather than directly confronting existing ones has not always been included by scholars within the definition of social movements. I argue that Twin Oaks and Navdanya are both social movements, with similar goals of prefiguring sustainable and feminist politics in order to mitigate the ecological catastrophe that is predicted to result from Western capitalist practices. However, each organization has chosen different tactics in order to achieve their goals.

Jasper (2014, p.22) defines social movements as "sustained, intentional efforts to foster or retard broad legal and social changes, primarily outside the normal institutional channels endorsed by authorities." Both Twin Oaks and Navdanya are sustained - having formed long-term organizations in order to achieve their goals - and intentional - having explicitly articulated goals relating to feminism and sustainability. In their Articles of Incorporation, Twin Oaks (Twin Oaks "Articles of Incorporation," n.d.) stated its mission:

> To eliminate hierarchical relationships between people; promote the practice of non-violence in personal, interpersonal, and political relationships; respect and preserve the natural environment for the use of all species, now and in the future; eliminate classism, racism, ageism, patriarchy, and other forms of oppressions, both within and outside of the

> community; practice community of property, with all those in the community sharing what they are, have, and can produce with one another.

Similarly, Navdanya (Navdanya "Our Mission," n.d.) has articulated its mission online:

> To empower the communities belonging to any religion, cast, sex, groups, landless people, small and marginal farmers, deprived women and children or any other needy person to ensure that they have enough to eat, they live in healthy environment and are able to take action independently and effectively to become self-reliant through sustainable use of natural resources and fairness and justice in all relationships.

Both Navdanya and Twin Oaks have very similar goals - to eliminate categorical hierarchies as articulated through those which are most pressing in their political-economic context, and to do so in a way which provides for people in an environmentally sustainable and ethical manner. However, Navdanya has chosen to form a traditional social movement organization which directly confronts the state and Western corporate influence, while Twin Oaks is building alternative structures with the hope that they will take hold amongst more people in the future.

Navdanya as a Post-Citizenship Movement

Navdanya can be categorized, according to Jasper (2014), as a post-citizenship movement. Post-citizenship movements "often aim at benefits for others: all of humanity, generations not yet born, those suffering in other countries, even other species" (Jasper, 2014, p. 120). Importantly, within Jasper's definition, movements have demands, and therefore some external entity on which they are making those demands. While Navdanya and Twin Oaks both strive to eliminate categorical hierarchy and ecologically harmful practices, Navdanya is making demands on existing industrial agricultural structures via the state, corporations, and farmers. According to some social movement scholars, including Traugott (1978), this anti-institutional

orientation is an essential criteria for defining what is or is not a movement. Anti-institutionality as a criteria focuses attention on the confrontation between opposing groups, meaning the movement must be directly opposing an existing societal structure (Traugott, 1978, p. 45). Navdanya as an organization, meets the criteria of anti-institutionalism because they actively challenge India's existing agricultural arrangements in favor of more sustainable alternatives.

Twin Oaks as an Extrainstitutional Movement

Twin Oaks, on the other hand, while meeting Jasper's definition of a social movement as a sustained and intentional effort to foster social change, does so in a manner that does not directly confront existing institutions. Twin Oaks could be understood as extra-institutional, meaning "it seeks to withdraw from the jurisdiction of the constituted authorities or to offer indirect and veiled resistance" (Traugott, 1978, p. 45). Traugott (1978) understands extra-institutionality as a stage of movement formation before they reach maturity or in response to severe repression. However, Ciccariello-Maher (2020, p.114) argues that communes represent the only alternative for strategic planning for socialist movements under capitalism, and in fact "the only possible solution for long-term oil dependency and the crisis of the present." Social movements have strategically used self-governing communities as sites of resistance and radical reterritorialization in Latin America, where indigenous communities have used communal spaces as barriers to capitalism and labor exploitation rather than attacks against it (Ciccariello-Maher, 2020). Through this lens, Twin Oaks is an extra-institutional social movement, not because it has not yet matured as an organization into an anti-institutional movement, but because developing new self-sustaining institutions is a rational response to the danger of ecological collapse under capitalist patriarchy.

NAVDANYA AND TWIN OAKS AS REAL UTOPIAS

Capitalist patriarchy is at the root of many of society's ills - poverty, homelessness, sexism, lack of access to healthcare - and now, global climate change, which, if we continue on this course, will imperil our food and water supplies, the stability of our coastlines, and lead to unprecedented extreme weather conditions that threaten the very foundation of human society (Mann and Kump 2015). Although the processes of climate change have been linked to capitalism, efforts at creating a more sustainable society often focus on technical adjustments rather than challenging current political and economic arrangements (Clark and York 2005; Gunel 2019). Marxist theorist Fredric Jameson (1994) famously stated "It seems to be easier for us today to imagine the thoroughgoing deterioration of the earth and of nature than the breakdown of late capitalism." Imagining a society beyond capitalism and patriarchy, where humans live in harmony with each other and the Earth without exploitation, could be described as Utopian, a word which originates from Thomas More's imaginary republic – literally "nowheresville" – in which all social conflict and distress has been overcome. Such endeavors are often dismissed as idealistic. However, utopias also manifest awareness of the fundamental fact that institutions are human works (Giroux 2003). As human works, institutions are in fact malleable, and ongoing study of organizational practices which are more or less successful in creating a less oppressively gendered society can in fact further us along the path of creating such a society.

Twin Oaks and Navdanya are actively attempting to implement many of the sustainability practices necessary to avert ecological catastrophe – including localized, organic food production, regenerative agriculture, elimination of waste, and renewable energy usage - as well as practicing feminist ideologies within their communities. Both communities could be

considered real utopias, places that are attempting to put their ideological ideals into practice while contending with the complexities of realizing those ideals. Ecological intentional communities, because they take on vastly different economic, social, cultural, and ecological practices than their surroundings, can be viewed as utopian projects.

The study of real utopias posits that emancipatory social science has the potential to reduce human suffering by critiquing existing institutions, developing an account of viable alternatives, and proposing a theory of transformation for realizing those alternatives (Wright 2013). Navdanya and Twin Oaks, for example, can both be considered as food utopias, because they attempt to implement self-sustaining food production and food sovereignty. Wald (2015) considers the framework of food sovereignty to be a form of utopian vision because it both challenges the corporatist agro-industry and envisions the radical transformation of food production, distribution and consumption. Both communities meet Wald's criteria of being based on small-scale producers, sustainable agriculture and a genuine democratic control of food policy. This is an example of prefigurative politics in which social movements embody the practices of the more just society they wish to create. The criteria posed by Wright as principles for the moral audit of any institution are equality, democracy, and sustainability which are all understood to be undermined by current dominant capitalist institutions. Twin Oaks and Navdanya both attempt to practice equality, democracy, and sustainability within the contexts of their unique utopian visions.

Twin Oaks and Navdanya are sites that help us to imagine what a more sustainable and equitable future might look like. In the face of extreme uncertainty in regard to the well-being of the Earth's natural environment and political and social unrest, these two communities model visions of elimination of hierarchy, prioritization of indigenous knowledge, egalitarian

distribution of resources, and intentional environmental stewardship. Capitalism's tendency towards infinite growth does not provide a plan for environmental degradation or growing inequity, so we must turn towards organizations which are attempting to embody utopian ideals to learn how to restructure our society.

FINAL REFLECTIONS

In this thesis, I have shown that ecological intentional communities, while sometimes creating unintended consequences, such as reproducing gendered divisions of labor and racism, are implementing practices that can restructure society for the better in terms of sustainability and gender equality. In concluding her study of communes in the United States, Kanter (1977, p. 236-7) wrote

> Utopian communities are important not only as social ventures in and of themselves but also as challenges to the assumptions on which current institutions are organized…Social problems, according to this view, are a function of structural defects in society and can be solved only by constructing a new society or by reshaping social institutions. Although some utopians experiments are more successful than others, and some succeed in eliminating particular problems only to introduce others, the mode of thinking that goes into the invention of a utopian community should be encouraged. It strives to implement ideals of a better way of living and relating, to consider options and alternatives, to become structurally inventive, and to experiment with the creation of wholly new worlds.

Kanter (1977, p.236) believed that utopian communities, such as Navdanya and Twin Oaks, are important not just in what they provide or accomplish for their members, but in that they provide alternative models for all kinds of social institutions, including work organizations, family structures, and participatory democracy. A utopian way of thinking not only provides options for

alternative structures but illuminates the fact that something other than the status quo is possible. In a late capitalist society, when inequality and climate collapse seem inevitable, utopian communities provide hope that humanity can choose another path. In this thesis, I have built upon Kanter's (1977) work, as well as the work of gendered organizational and transnational feminist theorists, as well as other feminist scholars, to demonstrate how my two research sites provide alternative visions of human potential.

Both sites begin to illuminate options for solving the climate crisis, because as opposed to previous research that has focused on capitalist solutions to climate change (Gunel 2019; see also Sasser 2018), Navdanya and Twin Oaks integrate feminism and anti-capitalism into their sustainability goals. Previous research has shown that these three ways of being must be intrinsically linked for any restructuring of society to be successful. Buckingham and Kulcur (2009) showed that combatting gender inequality is a necessary facet of combatting environmental injustice, while Tanner et al (2007) showed that women will continue to suffer disproportionately if environmental degradation continues. Research has also linked capitalism to the processes of climate change (Clark and York 2005). Therefore, in order to envision an alternative structure for society, we must look at communities which are attempting to implement all three ways of being: feminism, anti-capitalism, and sustainability.

Using Navdanya as a case study, I have illuminated how combatting patriarchy, capitalism, and environmental degradation must be contextualized, including taking the forces of colonialism and globalization into consideration. Navdanya models an alternative society where everyone has the right to grow and eat healthy and diverse foods, food producers are no longer reliant on the market, and the indigenous agricultural knowledge historically preserved by women is respected and freely shared. I have also shown how Navdanya mobilizes essentialist

rhetoric about the role of third-world women in environmental stewardship in order to increase their economic power and legitimize their agricultural knowledge. The organizational goals of Navdanya are a response to the Green Revolution which decimated indigenous agricultural practices in India that center anti-consumerism, feminism, and food sovereignty.

My research at Twin Oaks provides new directions for gendered organization theory, which has historically focused on ideal-type bureaucratic work organizations. Twin Oaks illuminates the potential of restructuring work and familial arrangements in a manner that directly confronts the unpaid care work of women and the hierarchical division of labor. This is a place that is actively attempting to implement Acker's (1990) vision of a total restructuring of work arrangements in which hierarchy is abolished and workers run things themselves. Importantly, the work arrangements at Twin Oaks are possible because all members equally own and manage the means of production without the exploitation of surplus value, as is the case in a capitalist economy. The communalizing of resources is a condition which renders practices that aim at eliminating patriarchal divisions of labor possible. At Twin Oaks, because labor is valued beyond its income generating potential, environmental stewardship and domestic responsibilities can be prioritized in a way that is not possible within a capitalist system. These arrangements are also culturally supported by the disruption of the nuclear family, which traditionally serves to legitimize private property and patriarchy (Engels 1972).

This thesis has demonstrated how ecological intentional communities can serve as real utopian models for restructuring society beyond patriarchy, capitalism, and environmental degradation. Such a restructuring would require not only rapid and unprecedented changes, but a complete transformation of the institutions that structure our society today. If ending patriarchy, capitalism, and environmental degradation are both intrinsically linked goals and necessary to

avoid further ecological collapse and injustice, as I have argued in this thesis, then further research is needed on ecological intentional communities. Questions to consider are: How do EICs balance meeting the needs of their members with organizational goals? How do they contend with existing as anti-capitalist, anti-patriarchal organizations within a society structured by capitalism and patriarchy? How are EICs restructuring conditions relating to, or else reproducing, intersecting oppressions such as race and class? Perhaps most important of many questions for further research is how reproducible the less-oppressively gendered, sustainable, and anti-capitalist structures found in EICs are in today's society which is so dominated by capitalism and patriarchy. Further research by feminist sociologists that continues to investigate how ecological intentional communities provide alternative visions for human society can contribute to an important ongoing conversation about how our society can avoid ecological collapse.

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